SLIPPERY
STONE

SLIPPERY STONE

an inquiry into Islam's stance on music

KHALID BAIG

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to Muslim youth

Beware the Pied Piper

TRANSLITERATION KEY

ء (ئؤإأ)	ʾ (a slight catch in the breath)	غ	gh (similar to French r)
ا	a	ف	f
ب	b	ق	q (heavy k, from the throat)
ت and ة	t (ة has an "h" sound at the end of a sentence)	ك	k
ث	th (as in "thorn")	ل	l
ج	j	م	m
ح	ḥ (heavy h, from deep within the throat)	ن	n
خ	kh ("ch" in Scottish loch)	ه	h (as in "help")
د	d (the hard "th" in "the")	و	w
ذ	dh (the soft "th" in "the")	ي	y (as in "yellow")
ر	r		**Vowels**
ز	z	ـَ ـً	a (slightly softer than the "u" in "but"); an
س	s	ـِ ـٍ	i (as in "in"); in
ش	sh	ـُ ـٌ	u ("oo" in "book"); un
ص	ṣ (heavy s, from the upper mouth)	آ ا ـٰ	ā (elongated a, as when you would stretch the "a" in "plastic")
ض	ḍ (heavy d, from the upper mouth)	أ	ā at the start of a word, ʾā in the middle (pronounced like اءَ)
ط	ṭ (heavy t, from the upper mouth)	و and ـُ	ū ("u" in "glue")
ظ	ẓ (heavy z, from the upper mouth)	ي and ـِ	ī ("ee" in "feet")
ع	ʿ (like two a's from deep within the throat)	ـّ	stress symbol, indicated by repetition of letter

Honorifics

سبحانه وتعالى	Glorified and Most High	ﷺ	May Allah's blessings and peace be upon him
عليه السلام	May peace be upon him	رضي الله عنه, رضي الله عنها	May Allah be pleased with him/her

هو الصفا الزلال لا يثبت عليه إلا أقدام العلماء

It (*samāʿ*) is a slippery stone; only the feet of the *ʿulamāʾ* can stay firm on it.

— Quoted in *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Foreword

My learned and esteemed friend, Khalid Baig, the author of this book, has been asking me for quite sometime to write a foreword on his misplaced assumption that I qualify to do so. The truth is that I find myself academically inadequate for the task. The author's own academically superb and scholarly introduction renders it needless to add any more to the subject. However in compliance with the author's wish I would like to draw the attention of the readers to some pertinent aspects in relation to the subject matter of the book.

The author of the book, an engineer by profession, has attained through the years a remarkable proficiency in Islamic scholarship and has established his reputation as a regular contributor to the column, "First Thing First," in the well-known English Muslim journal, *Impact International* published from London, UK. His writings on contemporary Islāmic issues won him recognition for his succinct analyses of issues facing the Muslim ummah. He has also translated into English the well-known book of prayers and supplications (*duʿāʾ*), *Munājat-e-Maqbūl*, compiled originally in the Urdu language by the renowned Sufi master from the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī (d. 1943). This translation, entitled the *Accepted Whispers*, was received with great eagerness and enthusiasm by the English speaking Muslim readership.

Now the author has come up with another academically sound book, *Slippery Stone*, which deals with the status of singing, music, and use of musical instruments in Islam. The book has been rightly titled, as music and singing can deteriorate to its lowest causing one to slip into a situation not sanctioned by Islām. Islām does allow poetry, poetical composition, and recitals without the use of musical instruments as long as these are done within well-defined limits. Allāh has endowed mankind with aesthetic sense but has also instructed us in its proper use.

Interest in poetry, poetical compositions, singing, music, and use of musical instruments is an age old phenomenon and the Muslim society of the seventh century inherited it from the pre-Islāmic era. Muslim scholars from the early Islāmic period to our time have written extensively on the subject. Out of these the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (Book of Songs) of Abū ’l-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 356/967) has evoked much interest in Europe, as it contains interesting anecdotes and abundant information about the then Muslim society. This is despite the fact that reliability and trustworthiness of the work are in question. Abū ’l-Faraj embellished stories and events in order to entertain the ʿAbbāsī caliphs, especially Harūn al-Rashīd (d. 193/809), by weaving anecdotes and stories around persons such as Ibn Surayj, Sukaynah bint al-Ḥusayn (d. 117/736), Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 188/804), and others.

Khalid Baig has discussed critically this as well as other sources available in Arabic, Urdu and English. The extensive list of original and secondary sources contained in the bibliography and references to relevant Qur’ānic verses and aḥādith (sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ) indicate the author’s grasp of the subject.

The author has shown how the restricted permission of samāʿ (recital of compositions in praise of Allāh or the Prophet ﷺ, *ḥamd* and *naʿt* or *madḥ*) without the use of musical instruments by certain Sufi orders was later misused and how in later years it deteriorated to what is now done in the name of *qawwālī*.

In the book there is quite a good discussion on the distinct differences between the various Arabic terms and terminologies used for singing, simple recitals, and recitation of the Qur’ān with *tajwīd* (correct pronunciation). The author has given an academically sound exposition and analysis of the Qur’ānic verses and reports in the Ḥadīth literature which are directly relevant to the subject matter of the book. He has discussed relevant issues surrounding the issue of music, singing, use of musical instruments, popular music and singing etc. and has explained clearly what is permissible and what is prohibited by Islām.

This book is a valuable addition to the English literature on the subject. Readers will appreciate the author's hard work in putting together his research on the subject and in discussing the matter so comprehensively by referring not only to original sources but also to contemporary works in Arabic, Urdu and English.

May Allāh ﷻ accept his efforts.

Syed Salman Nadvi
Formerly Professor and Chairman,
Department of Islamic Studies,
University of Durban-Westville,
South Africa

Preface

As I come to a stop at an intersection while driving home one afternoon, there is a sudden increase in the noise coming from the car in the next lane. The young driver has turned up the stereo volume to a maximum. Oblivious to his surroundings, he jerks left and right in his driver seat, entranced. I roll up my car windows and put on a cassette tape of a speech in the player attempting to drown out the vulgar headache-causing music. When the light turns green I make sure to keep a safe distance from that car.

Many people can see the pollution caused by the exhaust from the car. But few notice the pollution caused by the car speakers. When they talk about noise pollution, critics usually talk about the din of motor vehicles or heavy construction machinery. But what about the sound pollution caused by music machines? There is hardly a place that is beyond the reach of these machines. They surround us like an octopus. The embrace may feel soft but it is deadly.

The young man is one of the victims of this pollution. I can see him in Los Angeles, London, Kuala Lumpur, Karachi, or even Jeddah. He seems to be the same person, dressed in the same clothes, listening to the same vulgarities, reacting in the same insane manner. Like the homogenized milk we find at the breakfast table, the youth culture also has been homogenized by the gigantic churns of the media machine. This young man has no idea what the music is doing to his hearing, his nervous system, his body, and—most important—his soul. All he knows is that it is supposed to be fun, which is the paramount goal of the pop culture.

This proliferation of music has produced a desensitization that has made such things normal and acceptable that would have been unthinkable in the not-too-distant past. Today's flourishing Muslim music groups are a loud reminder of this change. Some labor under the notion that they are harnessing the power of music to serve the cause of Islām. For many others the appeal is simple: The issue is too confusing; let us just have fun. Staggering amounts of money and unbelievable amounts of time are spent pursuing this interest. Accompanying this is the cacophony of voices in today's music discussion in the Muslim world—in the corner meetings, around the coffee table, in youth forums, and in Internet chat rooms.

This book is an attempt to reduce this cacophony by taking a deep look at Islam's stance on music and singing from historic, cultural, and jurisprudential perspectives. Its publication marks the culmination of an effort that spanned more than five years. During this period I produced two other books but this book had to wait as I continued with my sporadic research. What made writing this book more demanding was the fact that I had the task of making the sensitive discussion of music accessible to the generations who have grown accustomed to both MTV and the "Islāmic music" influenced by the age of MTV. To what extent I have succeeded, I will leave it to the readers to judge.

I received support and encouragement from many people in the compilation of this work. Mufti Taqi Usmani provided detailed written answers to some questions. Mufti Zubair Bayat reviewed and approved the draft and showed great enthusiasm for its publication. Dr. Salman Nadvi painstakingly reviewed two drafts of this book providing invaluable suggestions. I am deeply indebted to him for all his help and support, his attention to details, and his generous allocation of time to discuss various issues related to it despite a busy schedule. Needless to say, any errors or shortcomings left in the book are solely my responsibility.

As with my previous books, this one would have been impossible without the active support of my children. My son Muneeb assisted me in all phases of its production from initial research to the preparation of the camera ready copy for the press, and everything in between. Immediately after graduation from college he spent several months working full time on it, double checking references, checking my translations from Arabic, and providing ongoing feedback on the draft. My daughters Areeba and Sumayya also provided critical review, leading to many passionate discussion sessions where we debated a point being made or the way it was being made. In addition they were primarily responsible for the biographical notes provided in the appendix, which are based on Arabic sources. They assisted with proofreading as well. May Allāh preserve them and richly reward them here and in the Hereafter.

For me it has been a rewarding journey through the worlds of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth scholars, Sufi masters, jurists, men of letters, and historians. It has also been quite a learning experience to see the dedicated work of the Orientalists—their generosity in praising the "Muslim contributions to music" and their devotion even to the task of learning the intricacies of *tajwīd*, although for subversive purposes. There is a rich heritage and a big challenge. I hope and pray that this book helps the readers to appreciate the heritage and understand the challenge, while getting clarity on the issue of music.

Khalid Baig
Jamādī al-Awwal 1429 / May 2008

Introduction

In his marvelous book of reflections, *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir*, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) makes an interesting observation about the singing of two laborers he once saw. They were alternately singing as they carried a heavy tree trunk. One of them would sing, and the other would listen attentively and then either repeat it or respond in song. Ibn al-Jawzī marvels at the wonderful power of singing to make their task lighter:

> I thought about the reason for this. I realized that each one of them was focused on what the other was singing, taking delight in it, and thinking of the response, so he kept on moving while forgetting the heavy load he was carrying.[1]

He then notes that all of us have to carry a load of difficulties in our lives. We need to keep our *nafs* (self) patient when deprived of things it loves or when facing things it hates. "So I realized that the best way of traversing the path of patience is through diversion."[2] As an example he mentions the Sufi master who was traveling on foot with a disciple while they were thirsty and he kept assuring that they would drink at the next well. Taking our mind off the immediate difficulties can take many forms, and it is obvious that what the laborers did in singing was make a productive use of this distraction.

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[1] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir*, فصل: تعليل النفس [Section: Keeping the *nafs* occupied], 78.

[2] Ibid.

Yet the same Ibn al-Jawzī is quick to censure singing in his *Talbīs Iblīs* (Devil's Deception):

> You should know that listening to singing entails two things. First, it distracts the heart from pondering the greatness of Allāh, praised is He, and engaging in His services. Second, it inclines the heart to the seeking of quick pleasures that seek their fulfillment in all the sensory desires.[3]

He then goes on to affirm, as many did before him, that singing *is* the charm for fornication and adultery.

The apparent contradiction between the two statements may be useful in understanding the nature of the controversy about music in the Islāmic discourse. Let us make the ridiculously simplistic assumption that these two passages were all that was available in the Islāmic source texts regarding music. We can then visualize the arguments of the various groups in this debate through this microcosm. Those supporting music would use the first passage and argue that music was the essential tool for lightening the burdens of life and traversing the path of patience. They would also argue that Ibn al-Jawzī himself listened to singing (because he listened to the laborers). Their opponents would, of course, use the second passage to show it was impermissible. And the Orientalists would use both passages to "prove" that Islāmic teachings on the subject were nebulous and self-contradictory and for that reason the music controversy in Islām could never be resolved.

In reality there is no conflict between the two statements because they are talking about two different things. The first is talking about the permissible work song; the other about the impermissible singing for vain entertainment. The first aims at making us forget hardships in a job that we must perform; the second makes us forget the job itself. It is our inability or unwillingness to differentiate between the two categories that makes the issue intractable.

James Robson, for example, begins his book *Tracts on Listening to Music* with this assertion: "The question of the lawfulness of listening to music has been the subject of long controversy among Muslims, a controversy, it would seem, which can never be settled."[4] This bold claim, repeatedly endlessly, is bought by many Muslims today. One often hears that there is no consensus on this question among Muslim scholars. This assertion ignores the fact that there are broad areas of agreement between all schools of Islāmic law regarding today's music. It is generally not recognized that most music filling the airwaves in the Muslim world today does so over vehement Ḥanafī, Mālikī, Shāfiʿī, Ḥanbalī, Salafī, Sufi, and Shīʿah objections. And even the few scholars who have supported the use of "music" have done so with restrictions that are ignored by those who invoke their support.

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[3] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ذكر تلبيس إبليس على الصوفية في السماع والرقص والوجد [On Iblīs' confounding of the Sufis in regard to *samā'*, dance, and ecstasy], 195.

Both this broad consensus and a general ignorance about it are remarkable since "differences between schools" is a common lament in religious discussions among educated Muslims. We tend to blame all of our problems on this difference. Yet we fail to take notice when the difference disappears. Or worse, we believe the rumor that it is there when it is not.

There are several factors shaping our attitudes. No matter where we live, we have heard music being played all our life through radio, films, television, and now the Internet and the cell phone. We have seen musicians being treated as celebrities. Through an incessant deluge of music coming from the media and gigantic enterprises devoted to cultural and commercial propaganda, we have been conditioned to consider music as normal and acceptable, indeed absolutely unavoidable.

All of this is of a recent vintage; music was neither that common nor that acceptable in a not too distant past. The colonialism of the past three centuries had a big role—not always fully recognized—in bringing out this sea change in Muslim societies. In its multi-pronged attack it also enlisted the support of "scholarly" works from dedicated Orientalists that assured us of music's historic legitimacy and praised us for our great achievement in developing music.

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[4] Robson, *Tracts on Listening to Music*, 1.

The fatwas that put a ḥalāl stamp on our indulgence, like the much-publicized fatwa from al-Azhar, are an outgrowth of this colonial past; they further tend to blur our vision and tremendously magnify the differences of legitimate scholarly opinions that do exist on the subject. Music flourishes in the Muslim world in that fog.

The difference between the actual consensus and controversy regarding music among scholars on the one hand and its popular perception on the other is tremendous. Most of us have heard that all aḥadīth declaring music to be prohibited are weak and unreliable; that great Sufi masters played and enjoyed music; and that such big names as Imām Ghazālī and Ibn Ḥazm were among its ardent supporters. Most of the people holding these opinions may not be aware that Imām Ghazālī forbids samāʿ (Sufi spiritual songs), let alone music, for the youth; that he prohibits most musical instruments including wind instruments, string instruments, and drums; and that he prohibits excessive involvement with even the permissible samāʿ. Further they may not be aware that such an ardent supporter of samāʿ as Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (Imām Ghazālī's brother) declared most musical instruments to be prohibited and disallowed the presence of women in samāʿ gatherings; that ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī declared samāʿ prohibited for the majority of the youth; and that most respectable Ḥadīth authorities have rejected the claim that all aḥadīth prohibiting music are weak and unreliable.

Obviously we need to see first hand the views of the scholars often mentioned in this discussion to find out what they said and what they meant by what they said. We also need to go back in history and examine all the forces that have been acting on our societies that have colored our understanding of this issue. The purpose of this book is then not to settle a controversy that cannot be settled, but to expose those extraneous forces and make the historical discussion on music among scholars accessible to the readers so we can cut that controversy to size. I aim not at giving a brave new answer to the music question but at explaining the answers already given by well-known authorities so we can easily evaluate the new answers being promoted today from some quarters both within the Muslim world and without.

TERMINOLOGY

In understanding the historical debate a central question arises. What did those who opposed or supported music actually oppose or support? Why is it deadly distraction for some, innocent entertainment for others, and a means of getting closer to Allāh for still others? Are they talking about the same thing? This is the question of terminology. The term *mūsīqā* (*mūsīqī* in Urdu) is an arabicized form of the Greek word mousikē, (which also gave us "music" in English). It came during the ʿAbbāsī rule through translations of Greek literature. In the source texts for Islāmic Sacred Law we do not find this word. Rather the terms used are *ghinā'*, *mazāmīr*, *maʿāzif*, and *malāhī*.

Ghinā' has several meanings. It means song, vocal music, an utterance of the voice with a prolonging and a sweet modulation thereof, and raising of the voice and continuing without interruption. It also refers to poetry or verse that is sung or chanted. The same root also gives us the meaning of being independent and not being in need of others. Accordingly the ḥadīth,[5]

لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَتَغَنَّ بِالْقُرْآنِ

has been interpreted by Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah, as meaning, "He is not one of us who is not content or satisfied with the Qur'ān," while Imām Shāfiʿī interpreted it as meaning, "He is not one of us who does not recite the Qur'ān in a plaintive and gentle voice."

This dual meaning of ghinā' is brought out in a story about Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. A person once asked him, "What do you say about ghinā'?" He responded, "It is a great thing. With it family ties are established, sorrow is lifted, and good things are done." The person said he did not mean this ghinā' (meaning affluence) but the other kind. When Ḥasan al-Baṣrī asked him to explain, the person started singing with full force, with jaws and nose stretching and eyes bulging. Ḥasan said, "I never thought that any intelligent person would, of his own accord, reach the state that I am seeing."[6] It is well-known that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was solidly against ghinā' and this may have been his way of driving the point home.

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[5] Abū Hurayrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب التوحيد، باب قول الله تعالى ﴿وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ﴾ [Book: Tawḥīd (Monotheism), Chapter: Regarding the verse "And whether you say quietly or loudly"], no. 7621.

When it refers to singing, ghinā' can have both positive and negative undertones; it may refer to just reciting loudly by an amateur or it may refer to professional singing. Ibn al-Jawzī mentions the singing of pilgrims, soldiers, and cameleers as original examples of ghinā' of Arabs.[7] In this sense he uses it interchangeably with *inshād,* which is the term he used while referring to the laborers mentioned in the story above. The word comes from *nashd*, which means raising one's voice. Inshād refers to poetic recitation in a loud voice. Ibn al-Jawzī writes,

> Pilgrims used to recite poems (*yunshidūn*) on the way to ḥajj in which they praised the Ka‘bah, Zamzam, and the Maqām of Ibrāhīm. Sometimes, they drummed along with the recitation. Listening to such poetry is permissible but not the singing that creates *ṭarab* and moves one away from moderation.[8]

Here is a key statement pointing to the problem ingredient in music: *ṭarab,* which refers to emotions related to extreme joy or extreme sorrow and also implies sensual pleasure. A *muṭrib* is a person who can cause ṭarab in others through the beauty of his voice and singing. As we shall see in chapter 10, when ṭarab is added to plain singing through instruments and professional expertise, we enter the prohibited territory. We frequently find statements from jurists that use the production of ṭarab as a criterion for the prohibition of a musical device.

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[6] Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 21:101(74–75). Surprisingly and unfortunately, one of the proponents of ghinā', ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī, quoted only the first part of this story thereby creating the impression that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī had praised singing. See al-Nābulsī, *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 35.

[7] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ذكر تلبيس إبليس على الصوفية في السماع والرقص والوجد [On Iblīs' confounding of the Sufis in regard to *samā‘*, dance, and ecstasy], 195.

[8] Ibid., 195–96.

As Ibn al-Jawzī points out, ghinā' later came to be associated solely with this ṭarab. After mentioning the permissible varieties of singing he talks about the love poetry describing the beauties of women and joys of drinking:

> For such songs they developed new tunes that move a person away from the limits of moderation and excite love of base desires . . . They added to it striking of wands, rhythmic modes to match the singing, duffs with bells, and flutes. This is what is called ghinā' today.[9]

This is the same definition that was given earlier by al-Ṭurtūshī (d. 520/1126) who stated that ghinā' literally meant raising of voice but in common usage (*ʿurf*) it meant melodious singing that caused ṭarab.[10] That explains why later Sufis coined another term, *samāʿ*, to distinguish it from the unacceptable ghinā'. The current use of the term *nashīd* is another way of distinguishing it from ghinā'. This is quite interesting, for some who are using the term also claim that music is generally permissible in Islām. Music may be permissible, but calling it *nashīd* may help make it sound *more* permissible.

Other terms related to ghinā' that are of interest to us are its derivatives *mughannī*, the professional man who performs ghinā', and *mughanniyah*, its feminine. There has never been any ambiguity about them; they always had a negative connotation, the same as the *ʿurfi* sense of ghinā' itself. That is why we see Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها, in the famous ḥadīth that shows permissibility of ghinā' (in its literal sense) on Eid, making it explicit that the girls who were singing were not *mughanniyahs*. (It is ironic that *mughannīs* should be invoking this ḥadīth as a justification for their occupation).

Yet another term is *mazāmīr*. It is the plural of *mizmār* and is derived from *zamar*, which refers to blowing in a wind instrument. *Mizmār* is a musical reed or pipe. Thus it refers to wind instruments like *surnāy*, *karjah*, *nāy*, *shabbābah*, and *yarāʿ*, which are different forms of flutes and reed pipes. But it is also used in figurative

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9. Ibid., 198.
10. Al-Ṭurtūshī, *Kitāb Taḥrīm al-Ghinā'*, 212.

speech to refer to the beauty of someone's voice, as in the ḥadīth of Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī ﵁ in reference to the singing of Psalms by Prophet Dāwūd ﵇. On the other hand *zammārah* (the woman who sings and plays mizmār) refers to both prostitutes and songstresses, which is quite revealing of the historic association. It also refers to flutes.

The generic term for musical instruments is *malāhī* (instruments of diversion), which is used interchangeably with *maʿāzif* (musical instruments). Maʿāzif is the plural of either *miʿzaf or ʿāzf.* It is a generic term that applies to all stringed, wind, and percussion instruments including *duff, ṭunbūr* and *shabbābah.* The term *malāhī* contains within it the reason for its abhorrence, namely the distraction it causes from the purpose of our life.

It was thus deemed necessary to retain in this book Arabic terms like ghinā', samāʿ, lahw, and malāhī as well as the Arabic names for many musical instruments, to avoid distortions caused by their rough English translations. Ghinā' is used in its *ʿurfī* sense described above to mean professional singing (mostly accompanied with instruments) that aims at causing ṭarab. Samāʿ is used to mean the spiritual singing of Sufis. Lahw means any amusement or idle pastime. Malāhī and maʿāzif mean musical instruments. While doing this I take note of the advice of Dr. Ismāʿīl Rājī al-Fārūqī (d. 1406/1986) who makes a strong case in his *Toward Islāmic English* for enriching English by using original Arabic terms where no English terms exist to carry the same shades of meanings. He reminds us: ". . . intellectual loyalty to English form has no right to assume priority over loyalty to meaning."[11]

ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 provides the necessary theoretical and historic background and comprises chapters 1 through 4. Since it all begins with poetry, the first chapter looks at the Islāmic view of poetry and how that affected Arabic poetry. We examine the claim made by some prominent Orientalists that poetry remained unaffected by Islām. We look at the status and role of the poet in the pre-Islāmic society and the revolution in poetry brought out by Islām. We find that under Islām some poetry was censured, other was permitted, and yet other was encouraged.

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[11] Al-Fārūqī, *Toward Islamic English,* 12.

The next chapter deals with the history of music in the Islāmic world until the colonial period. This is a survey of Muslim society's attitudes towards music. The fact that music and musicians were there is often used as proof of its legitimacy. So the question arises as to what the Muslim society thought of this activity. Also what did the scholars say about it throughout our history? More details are provided in appendix 2 where we look at the timeline of books written on the subject by prominent scholars, from the earliest time to our day.

A big change in attitudes started as Muslim lands came under the hegemony of European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This onslaught was helped by the concomitant media revolution. Colonialism combined with the emerging media technologies—the gramophone, radio, film, and television—altered the landscape beyond recognition. It continues to do that with the music videos, the Internet, and the cell phone. Certainly our discussion of music cannot be complete without delving into the role of modern technologies in shaping our attitudes about it. Actually, the disruptions caused in the Muslim society by the uncritical acceptance of Western technology are huge and hugely under-discussed. The discussion in chapter 3 just touches on the tip of this iceberg. We discuss how these technologies were implanted in the Muslim world and what the outcome was.

Coupled with this has been an intellectual campaign led by the Orientalists, whose pen worked hand in hand with the sword (actually, the gun) of the colonial armies. The leading light among them was Henry George Farmer and we mainly look at his work, although we briefly touch on the work of Israeli Orientalist Amnon Shiloah as well. This discussion also leads us into a comparison of Islām's record on music with that of Christianity. This is the subject of chapter 4.

With this historic context in our mind we can appreciate better how we landed where we are today and come to terms with our own attitudes about music. This then leads us into part 2 where we look at the Islāmic source texts and their interpretation as provided by well-respected authorities. Chapter 5 is devoted to a discussion of the Qur'ānic verses that suggest prohibition of ghinā' and malāhī, followed by a discussion of the verses that are claimed to be indicating permissibility. Chapter 6 discusses the aḥadīth showing prohibition as well as those showing permissibility. Only a small number of sound aḥādīth have been included here and the discussion covers both their authenticity and interpretation. Chapter 7 gives a brief description of the dominant views expressed by the Companions, Successors and other early Muslim authorities.

Much of the apparent support for "Islāmic music" comes from Sufi orders, some of whom have conducted it with religious zeal. Not surprisingly, in discussions about music names of some Sufis are inevitably mentioned by proponents of music. We take up this subject in chapter 8. In addition to a general discussion of Sufi views, this chapter looks at the arguments of Imām Ghazālī, his brother Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī. We take a close look at exactly what they had said. Most people, for example, may not realize that while they defended samāʿ, they were solidly against *malāhī*. It was the Sufis who called samāʿ a slippery stone, thereby vividly describing its dangers.

There have been only two prominent persons in history who argued the case for the unmitigated permissibility of lahw and malāhī. They were Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī and we look at their arguments in chapter 9. We learn why most prominent authorities rejected their claims. Since the well-circulated fatwa of al-Azhar also relies on their opinions, we look at it in this chapter as well.

Next, in chapter 10 we learn the verdict of all major schools of Islāmic law. This includes not only the four established schools of Sunni Islām but also the Salafis and the Shīʿahs. References to authentic sources for each school help us map out their common ground as well as their minor differences, within the schools as well as between them, in some detail.

Part 2 thus presents the discussion among scholars of all persuasions in sufficient detail. Then, in part 3 we take stock of our current situation. Chapter 11 deals with some snapshots from the current music scene in the Muslim world. The arguments examined here are not rooted in the historic scholarly discussion on the subject despite the frequent reference of their proponents to it. That is why they are placed here and not in part 2. Three issues are discussed. On the theoretical side there was American musicologist Lois al-Faruqi who tried to "Islāmize" most music in the Muslim societies and claimed that it was informed by the Qur'ānic recitation. On a practical level there are the *nashīd* concerts aimed at using "good music" to fight bad music to save our youth. We examine these here. The last issue discussed here is *talḥīn* or singing in Qur'ānic recitation, an old problem with a new momentum generated by our widespread ambivalence about music.

Finally, if the realization of our current situation ignites some concern, then chapter 12 may provide advice and reflections to positively channel the energy so released.

A discussion of the Islāmic view of nashīds in the light of contemporary fatāwā is given in appendix 1. A detailed look at books about Islam's view of music written since the third century of hijrah is provided in appendix 2. Appendix 3 includes biographical notes regarding the lives of more than one hundred and twenty prominent people mentioned in this book. A glossary has also been provided in the end.

Of necessity this book contains a lot of references to Arabic works. The standards for doing so are still evolving and there is no scheme that is completely satisfactory. In this regard I have adopted a new style for listing the section or chapter headings. In classical books section headings often contain significant useful information. I have provided these headings in Arabic while giving an English translation in parenthesis. Arabic is much easier to read for those who know it, while a translation will help others gain insights about the author's purpose. A transliteration here would not be desirable as it would be unfathomable for those who do not understand Arabic, and less than satisfactory for those who do.

Part One

HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 1

ISLĀM AND POETRY

GHINĀʾ MEANS SINGING, AND TO SING YOU NEED something that can be sung. Quite naturally, poetry precedes singing. In case this simple point is not obvious to someone—like the devoted followers of Sigmund Freud—we may refer to sociologist Georg Simmel who says: "The source of vocal music is the spoken word, which is exaggerated by emotion in the direction of rhythm and modulation."[1] He argues that vocal music arises when plain language is felt inadequate to express powerful emotions like anger, joy, or mystical religious feelings.

Thus, we begin our inquiry into singing with an inquiry into poetry.

Power of the Poet

It is generally known that poetry was the highest achievement and the pride of Arab society. Poets enjoyed roughly the same kind of power that is displayed today by the mass media. And nearly the same concern for truth and justice. An Arabic saying captured it vividly: The most beautiful verse was the one that contained the most lies.[2] At the same time, the might of their eloquence was unmistakable. They could manipulate emotions of love or anger. They could build or sink reputations. They could start wars.

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[1] Georg Simmel (1882), "Psychological and Ethnological Studies on Music," in *Georg Simmel: The Conflict in Modern Culture and Other Essays,* trans. by K. Etzkorn (Columbia University Press: New York, 1968), 100. Quoted in Etzkorn, *Music and Society*, 12.

We can appreciate their power by taking a quick look at Abū 'l-Ṭayyib Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn al-Mutanabbi (d. 354/965), considered by many as the greatest of Arab poets. More than forty commentaries have been written on his works, which remain very popular even today. He lived by his poetry and died by it. Here is a poet who exemplifies the best and the worst that Arab poetry had to offer.

Al-Mutanabbi was born in Kūfa, Irāq. He moved to the desert in al-Shām and became a master of poetry. In his youth he led a revolt claiming to be a prophet. The revolt was quickly put down and he was imprisoned by Lu'lu', the governor of Ḥimṣ. According to one report the claim gave him his nickname, al-Mutanabbi, or "he who claims to be a prophet." Others say that he was given the nickname because he compared himself to prophets in some of his verses. In any case, he eventually recanted and was released. He lived a wandering life, traveling from ruler to ruler, seeking a patron for his political ambitions. He joined the court of Sayf al-Dawlah ibn Ḥamdān in 337/948 in Ḥalab (Aleppo), writing many eulogies for him. It was during this stay that many of his best works were written.

But al-Mutanabbi was a man with a huge ego and a poor temper. He demanded special treatment from the ruler and looked with disdain at those around him. Eventually an argument with Ibn Khālawayh, a grammarian at the court, led to his departure. He then joined the court of the Ikshids of Egypt in 346/957 and wrote eulogies for the regent, Abū 'l-Misk Kāfūr. Kāfūr promised him governorship in his domain, but when he saw al-Mutanabbi's mastery in poetry and his ambitions he changed his mind. Turned down, al-Mutanabbi insulted Kāfūr in a poem and fled to Irāq, with ʿAḍud al-Dawlah of the Būyid Dynasty as his new patron. He later left him as well and was traveling to Kūfa in 354/965 when he was killed in revenge for insulting a tribal leader.

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[2] Al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb Taḥrīm al-Ghinā'*, no. 81, 218.

Al-Mutanabbi's egomaniac nature can be seen in his bombastic poetry. In a famous verse he says:

أنا الذي نظر الأعمى إلى أدبي   وأسمعت كلماتي من به صممُ

I am the one that (even) the blind look at my poetry
And my words make him hear who has deafness.

In another, he says:

وما الدهر إلا من رواة قصائدي   إذا قلت شعراً أصبح الدهر منشداً

What is time, except a rhapsodist for my poems.
When I say a verse, time starts reciting it.

He says to an adversary:

صغرت عن المديح فقلت أهجي   كأنك ما صغرت عن الهجاء
فما فكّرت قبلك في محالٍ   ولا جرّبت سيفي في هباء

You are too small for eulogy. So you said, "satirize me."
As if you are not too small for satire.
But I never before you gave my thoughts to the absurd.
And I never tried my sword on dust.

Here is the power of the poet. He can build reputations with eulogy or destroy them with satire. But even his satire means publicity so it is not awarded to everyone. The poet has ridiculed his victim and increased the sting by saying that the victim did not even deserve that much attention.

No one disputes Mutanabbi's eloquence, his mastery of the language, and his poetic genius. But, as with the pre-Islāmic poets, his was just raw power. Coming three centuries after Islām, he is not representative of Islāmic poetry. In fact his Islāmic credentials are very weak. 'Ā'iḍ al-Qarnī lists more than sixty of his verses that include apostasy or other objectionable content.[3] We have looked at him to get a good idea about the mindset of the poet. With his detachment from Islām, he is more a representative of the pre-Islāmic Arab poets. They were people who wielded great power and a broken moral compass to guide and control it. They were preoccupied with love and war, with nothing more than ego, greed, and tribalism governing these enterprises as well as their versification of them.

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[3] Al-Qarnī, *Imbrāṭur al-Shu'arā'*, 167.

The central question that we need to investigate is how did Islām view and affect this state of affairs. Did Islām banish poetry, transform it, or leave it unchanged? That is essential for understanding Islām's view of singing. Obviously, if Islām subjected poetry to a new moral scrutiny, it would make sense that it would do the same for singing. On the other hand, if it let poetry retain its Jāhiliyyah characteristics then probably the same could be expected of singing. As poetry is the precursor of singing, poetic reform had to be a precursor of reform in the latter. The direction of change in the first would be an indicator of the direction of change in the second.

The Orientalists—those who champion the cause of music in Islām—understand this very well and make a bold claim that poetry remained unchanged under Islām. Here is Israeli musicologist and Orientalist Amnon Shiloah, whose *Music in the World of* Islām is available in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. In his book he celebrates the "Great Musical Tradition" of Islām. The Pellat quote that he is using comes from a work edited by Bernard Lewis.

> Despite the vehement attacks of the strict theologists, Medina became a centre of fashion, elegance, frivolous poetry and exciting music. Referring to this paradoxical development in the two holy cities, Pellat writes: "Whereas one might expect the places where the Prophet had lived to produce a form of religious poetry paralleling the pious activities of their inhabitants, what the literature brings us is the celebration of a life of pleasure" [4] (Pellat 28:144). In fact the new religion does not seem to have been a source of inspiration for those who first adhered to it, except perhaps in folk creativity that is unknown to us. **Patriotic, heroic or Islāmic songs were nonexistent in**

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[4] Pellat, "Jewelers with Words," in *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*, ed. by Bernard Lewis, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 144.

> **this period, and all energies were invested in one favorite theme—love** [emphasis added].[5]

We will return to this fantastic claim that the poetry of the early Muslims, i.e. the Companions and Successors, was no different from the pagan poetry of pre-Islāmic Arabia, later in this chapter. But first let us look at Islām's interactions with the poets and its view of poetry.

Islām on Poetry

In a society where you did not want to be on the wrong side of a powerful poet, Islām did the unimaginable: in one verse it took *all* the poets to task for their waywardness. At the same time it made an exception for those who were committed to using the power of poetry in the service of virtue.

وَٱلشُّعَرَآءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ ٱلْغَاوُۥنَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِى كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ ﴿٢٢٥﴾
وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢٢٦﴾ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ
وَذَكَرُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَٱنتَصَرُوا۟ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مَا ظُلِمُوا۟ ۗ وَسَيَعْلَمُ ٱلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوٓا۟ أَىَّ
مُنقَلَبٍ يَنقَلِبُونَ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

> And the Poets—It is those straying in Evil, who follow them. Do not you see that they wander distracted in every valley? And that they say what they practice not? Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allāh, and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked. And soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take![6]

It was a devastating blow to the errant behavior of the poets and their ignorant followers. But it was not meant to ban all poetry; it was meant to transform it into a force for good not evil. It is reported that ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضي الله عنه (d. 8/629), Ḥassān ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه (d. 54/674), and Kaʿb ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه (d. 50/670) came to the Prophet ﷺ crying when this verse was revealed. They said, "O Prophet of Allāh, Allāh revealed this verse and He knows that we are poets." The Messenger ﷺ said, "Read what follows it (i.e. the exception following the condemnation). This applies to you." [7] He also said, "Defend, but do not say anything except the truth. And do not mention the forefathers and mothers (i.e. do not make them the objects of your satire)."[8] In another ḥadīth he also laid down Islām's view of poetry in a few memorable words:

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[5] Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islām*, 11.

[6] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Shuʿarā' 26:224–227.

> الشِّعْرُ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الْكَلَامِ، فَحَسَنُهُ كَحَسَنِ الْكَلَامِ، وَقَبِيحُهُ كَقَبِيحِ الْكَلَامِ
> Poetry is the same as speech. The beautiful in it is like the beautiful in speech and the ugly in it is like the ugly in speech.[9]

In other words poetry is not disliked for its own sake but for its contents. The beauty of poetry, like all beauty in our life, henceforth had to be judged using the yardstick of truth, honesty, and morality. The great poetic reform had begun.

In his *tafsīr* of these verses, Imām Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) summarizes the Islāmic position on poetry, "In poetry there is that whose recitation is permissible, that whose recitation is disliked, and that whose recitation is prohibited."[10] Al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058) puts poetry in three categories, desirable, permissible, and prohibited:

> It is desirable if it admonishes against indulgence in this world or attracts one to the Hereafter or encourages noble qualities; it is permissible (i.e. neutral) if it is free of any indecencies and lies; it is forbidden when it is tainted by lies or indecencies.[11]

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[7] Abū 'l-Ḥusayn al-Barād in *Muṣannaf ibn Abī Shaybah*, كتاب الأدب، الرخصة في الشعر [Book: Etiquette, Chapter: Permission in poetry], no. 26042, 5:278. See also *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 226, 16:96.

[8] Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 226, 16:96.

[9] ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ ؓ in al-Bukhārī, *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, باب الشعر حسنه كحسن الكلام ومنه قبيح [Chapter: The beautiful in poetry is like the beautiful in speech, and there is ugly in it too], no. 864, p. 186.

[10] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 224, 16:86.

[11] Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (364–450 / 974–1058) as quoted in al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 227, 19:200(150).

While there is some difference between the two categorizations, the idea that some poetry is permissible and some is prohibited is common to both. This is borne out by the Prophetic sayings and actions in this regard. For those involved in business as usual he said,

لَأَنْ يَمْتَلِئَ جَوْفُ أَحَدِكُمْ قَيْحًا خَيْرٌ لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يَمْتَلِئَ شِعْرًا

> That your belly should be filled with pus is better than that it should be filled with poetry.[12]

In another narration, Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ reports,

> We were walking with the Messenger ﷺ when a poet came who was reading his poetry aloud. The Messenger ﷺ said, "Take hold of this Shayṭān, or restrain this Shayṭān. That one's belly should be filled with pus is better than that it should be filled with poetry."[13]

As al-Qurṭubī explains the particular poet may have been one of those who used their poetry to extort money. They would go to extremes in praising a person if he paid them and in satirizing and ridiculing him if he refused to pay. He writes: "There is no disagreement that for anyone who is like that, his poetical composition and his earning from it are ḥarām."[14]

For poetry free of these problems, and containing words of wisdom, the aḥādīth show support. Occasionally, the Messenger ﷺ himself listened to such poetry.

عَنْ عَمْرِو بْنِ الشَّرِيدِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ رَدِفْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
يَوْمًا فَقَالَ هَلْ مَعَكَ مِنْ شِعْرِ أُمَيَّةَ بْنِ أَبِي الصَّلْتِ شَيْءٌ قُلْتُ نَعَمْ قَالَ هِيهْ
فَأَنْشَدْتُهُ بَيْتًا فَقَالَ هِيهْ ثُمَّ أَنْشَدْتُهُ بَيْتًا فَقَالَ هِيهْ حَتَّى أَنْشَدْتُهُ مِائَةَ بَيْتٍ

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[12] Ibn ʿUmar ؓ in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الأدب، باب ما يكره أن يكون الغالب على الإنسان الشعر [Book: Etiquette, Chapter: Dislike of poetry being predominant in a person], no. 6224.

[13] Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī ؓ in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب الشعر [The Book of Poetry], no. 6032.

[14] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 224, 16:92–93.

> ʿAmr ibn al-Sharīd reports from his father who said, "One day I was riding with the Messenger ﷺ and he asked, "Do you remember any poems from Umayyah ibn Abī 'l-Ṣalt?" I said yes. He said, "Go ahead." So I recited one verse. Then he asked for more and I recited another one. Then he asked for more. (This continued) until I had recited to him a hundred verses."[15]

Again al-Qurṭubī explains: "The Messenger ﷺ listened to so many verses of Umayyah ibn Abī 'l-Ṣalt because his poetry contained words of wisdom."[16] Similarly this Prophetic statement shows an appreciation for a good verse:

أَصْدَقُ كَلِمَةٍ قَالَهَا الشَّاعِرُ كَلِمَةُ لَبِيدٍ أَلَا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ مَا خَلَا اللهَ بَاطِلُ

> The most truthful words that a poet said was this line from Labīd: "Verily, everything besides Allāh is false." [17]

There is also encouragement for the use of poetry to attack pagan ideals and ideas. ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, Ḥassān ibn Thābit, and Kaʿb ibn Mālik رضي الله عنهم, were foremost among the prominent poets who used their talent in this way and were encouraged by the Prophet ﷺ to do so. The Prophet ﷺ told them: "Satirize the Quraysh. That is harder on them than the throwing of arrows."[18] When the Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah during the ʿUmrah of Qaḍā', ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضي الله عنه was walking in front of him reading aloud his poem (that began), "O, the sons of unbelievers get out of his way." Sayyidunā ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه questioned

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[15] ʿAmr ibn al-Sharīd in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب الشعر [The Book of Poetry], no. 6022.

[16] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 224, 16:86. Umayyah ibn Abī 'l-Ṣalt (d. 5 AH) was from Taif. He knew about previous books and abstained from wine and worship of idols.

[17] Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الأدب، باب ما يجوز من الشعر والرجز والحداء وما يكره منه [The Book of Etiquettes, Chapter: What is permissible and what is disliked in *shiʿr*, *rajaz*, and *ḥudā*], no. 6217. Labīd ibn Rabīʿah (d. 41/661) was a famous poet from the Jāhiliyyah period who accepted Islām.

[18] Kaʿb ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب فضائل الصحابة، باب فضائل حسان بن ثابت [Book: Virtues of the Companions, Chapter: Merits of Ḥassān ibn Thābit], no. 6550.

Ibn Rawāḥah, saying, "Are you reciting poetry in the Ḥaram and in front of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ?" But the Messenger ﷺ said, "Leave him, ʿUmar. For this is faster (in piercing them) than the spraying of arrows."[19]

This was guided by the general principle laid down in a ḥadīth:

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يُجَاهِدُ بِسَيْفِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ

The believer fights with his sword and his tongue.[20]

Thus we find Ḥassān ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه saying to Abū Sufyān ibn al-Ḥārith:[21]

هَجَوْتَ مُحَمَّداً فَأَجَبْتُ عَنْهُ　　　وَعِنْدَ اللهِ فِي ذاكَ الجَزَاءُ
أَتَهْجُوهُ ، وَلَسْتَ لَهُ بِكُفْءٍ　　　فَشَرُّكُمَا لِخَيْرِكُمَا الفِدَاءُ
وَإِنَّ أَبِيْ وَوَالِدَهُ وَعِرْضِي　　　لِعِرْضِ مُحَمَّدٍ مِنكُم وِقَاءُ

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[19] Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, كتاب الأدب، ما جاء في انشاد الشعر [Book: Etiquettes, Chapter: Regarding poetry recital], no. 3084. Imām Tirmidhī refers to other reports that suggest the incident involved Kaʿb ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه and considers them more reliable. In any case, this should be contrasted with the ḥadīth about two little girls who were singing a poem about the battle of Buʿāth in the home of the Prophet ﷺ, and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه had objected. The Messenger ﷺ asked him to let them continue, because it was the day of Eid. The Prophetic statement here emphasizes the *desirability* of the reading of this kind of poetry, while in that incident it only showed a limited Eid-day permissibility for singing.

[20] Kaʿb ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه in *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند المكين، حديث كعب بن مالك الأنصاري رضي الله تعالى عنه [Musnad of the Makkans, Chapter: Ḥadīths of Kaʿb ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī], no. 15725, 12:310–11. The modern-day nashīd artists who claim that they are doing jihad with their music, should note that the ḥadīth stops at the tongue; it does not mention fighting with one's *duff*, or *ṭunbūr*, or *kūbah*. Neither is there any other ḥadīth giving the slightest justification for that claim.

[21] Abū Sufyān ibn al-Ḥārith should not be confused with Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, the famous leader of the Quraysh. Abū Sufyān ibn al-Ḥārith was a cousin and foster brother of the Prophet ﷺ, who was close to him but turned against him after his Prophethood. Before the Opening of Makkah he finally accepted Islām, composing a poem apologizing for his past behavior.

لِسَانِيْ صَارِمٌ لا عَيْبَ فِيهِ   وَبَحْرِي لا تُكَدِّرُهُ الدِّلاءُ

You satirized Muḥammad ﷺ and I responded on his behalf.
And with Allāh is the recompense for that.
Do you satirize him and you are not his equal?
The worse of the two of you should be sacrificed for the better of the two of you.
My father, my grandfather, and my honor
Are a protection for the honor of Muḥammad ﷺ against you.
My tongue is very precise. There is no flaw in it.
And my ocean (poetry) cannot be contaminated by buckets (of your criticism).[22]

We should note the moral and logical weight of the second verse. There was never the slightest doubt, even in the eye of the relative-turned-enemy, as to who was the best person. The third verse shows the poet's determination to defend the Prophet's honor despite the possibility that he and his family will be targeted in revenge for that. The last line makes use of the fact that *baḥr* means both poetic meter and ocean.

Ḥassān ibn Thābit ؓ was known as the Messenger's poet and the Prophet ﷺ had a pulpit built for him in the Masjid from which he used to read aloud his poems.[23]

Early Muslims and Poetry

Both the love for poetry and a concern for its moral purpose can be seen in the lives of the Companions and their successors. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463/1071) said:

> All the senior Companions and scholars and people worth following either composed poetry or listened to it happily when it contained wisdom or permissible content; i.e. it did not contain lewdness, obscenities, or hurt for other Muslims.[24]

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[22] *Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit*, (Beirut: Dar El-Marefah, 1427/2006), 16.

[23] Narrated by ʿĀ'ishah ؓ, as reported in al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 227, 19:197(148).

[24] Abū ʿUmar, quoted in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 224, 16:89.

Among the Banī ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib there was no man or woman who did not compose poetry, except Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.[25] Among the Prophet's ﷺ close relatives, Sayyidah Fāṭimah (d. 11/632), Sayyidunā Ḥasan (d. 50/670), Sayyidunā Ḥusayn (d. 60/679), Sayyidunā ʿAbbās (d. 32/653), and his son Sayyidunā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās (d. 67/687) رضي الله عنهم were all poets. All the rightly guided Caliphs composed poems and enjoyed them. There are numerous poems from prominent Successors and the religious leaders and scholars after them.

Once Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه (d. 23/644) was on his nightly round when he saw a light in one of the homes. An old woman was sifting wool while reciting these verses:

على محمدٍ صلاةُ الأبرار   صلى عليه الطيّبون الأخيارْ
قد كنتَ قوّاماً بُكاً بالأسحارْ   يا ليتَ شِعْري والمنايا أطوار
هل يَجمعنّي وحبيبي الدارْ

On Muḥammad ﷺ are the prayers of blessings from the pious.
The chosen, the best send blessings on him.
You used to stand and cry in the early dawn hours.
I wish I knew—as death separates us into different groups
Shall the (permanent) abode join me with my beloved (the Messenger ﷺ)?

As he listened, Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه sat down and wept, moved.[26]

On the other hand, we find him firing one of his officials because of the latter's objectionable poetry. This was Nuʿmān ibn ʿAdī ibn Naḍlah in Maysān, Baṣra. Once he said some verses, which included this line,

لَعَل أميرَ المؤمِنينَ يَسُوءه   تَنادُمُنا بِالجَوْسَق المُتَهَدَم

Maybe it will displease the Amīr al-Mu'minīn—
Our drinking in a torn down villa

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[25] Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 227, 19:199(150). This exception was by Divine design. It was inappropriate for the Messenger ﷺ on whom the Qur'ān was revealed to have anything to do with poetry.

[26] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 224, 16:87.

Sayyidunā ʿUmar ؓ wrote him, "Your words have reached me. And it does displease me. I have discharged you." Later Nuʿmān came and offered an apology: "Amīr al-Mu'minīn, By Allāh, I did not drink at all. That is just a verse that slipped from my tongue." ʿUmar ؓ said, "I think so. But, by Allāh you will never be working for me after having said what you said." [27]

We find Umawī khalīfāh ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 99/717) with the same concern. When he became khalīfāh, he wrote to the governor in Madīnah, "I have known ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿah and al-Aḥwaṣ (two poets in the city) for their evil and wickedness. So when my letter reaches you, send them over to me." When they arrived, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz interviewed both of them and ordered them to be expelled. ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿah repented and was forgiven. Al-Aḥwaṣ failed to do so. When an Anṣarī tried to intercede on his behalf the khalīfāh said, "By Allāh, as long as I have power, I will not let him return. He is a sinner who boasts about his sins." [28]

We can see from the above that Islām presented a very clear notion of good and bad poetry, inculcated those values in its followers, and used its powers to promote the good and suppress the bad.

Islām's Influence on Arabic Poetry

We now return to the Orientalist claim that the poetry of the early Muslims was just love poetry and that patriotic, heroic, or Islāmic songs were non-existent during that time. The reality is just the opposite. Islām affected Arabic poetry in the same way it affected all aspects of life; it revolutionized it. Totally new themes, inspired by Islāmic ideals, replaced the pagan themes.

Initially the interest in poetry decreased as poetry paled in the presence of the Qur'ān. This went to such an extent that we find on one occasion there was no one interested when Ḥassān ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه came to recite his poem in the Masjid.[29] Perhaps this break was necessary. For something as entrenched in their minds as Arabic poetry was, it is natural that a period of adjustment was needed for the great change in direction that poetry was to go through. Some poets of old could not make the transition and stopped producing. Others were successful in managing change. The case of Ḥassān ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه is especially impressive as he was sixty when he accepted Islām. At that ripe age, he was able to break the mold and lead the Islāmic revolution in poetry. In time a new generation of poets came that was immersed in Islāmic values.

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[27] Ibn Saʿd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, الطبقة الثانية من المهاجرين والأنصار – ٤١٩ عديّ بن نضلة [The Second Generation from the Muhājirīn and Anṣār. Bio. no. 419: ʿAdī ibn Naḍlah], 4:130. Quoted by Ibn Kathīr (10:385–86) and by al-Qurṭubī (16:90–91) in their tafsīrs of Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 226.

[28] Reported by Zubayr ibn Bakkār, as quoted in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Shuʿarā', verse 224, 16:91–92.

RAJAZ

In the new poetry three areas stand out: *rajaz*, *madḥ*, and *targhīb* and *tarhīb*. *Rajaz* is a particular poetic meter. It consists of the pattern "*mustafʿilun*" repeated six times. *Urjūzah* (pl. *arājīz*) is the poem written in the rajaz meter. Both the styles and focus of poems written in this meter were sufficiently different from other poems to make it a genre in its own right; it was midway between rhymed prose and poetry. Accordingly the person who composed it was called *rājiz*, not *shāʿir*. *Rajaz* was used to produce short songs for work and war. It stands out from other poetry because the Prophet ﷺ himself recited *arājīz* at times of hard labor as well as during war. While the Muslims were digging the trench to defend themselves against the allied attack—hungry and fatigued as they were—the Messenger ﷺ said,

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّ الْعَيْشَ عَيْشُ الآخِرَهْ   فَاغْفِرْ لِلأَنْصَارِ وَالْمُهَاجِرَهْ

> O Allāh! The real life is that of the Hereafter, (so please) grant forgiveness to the Anṣār and the Muhājirs.

In reply the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār said,

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[29] Al-Qāḍī, *Shiʿr al-Futūḥ al-Islāmiyyah,* 158.

نَحْنُ الَّذِينَ بَايَعُوا مُحَمَّدَا   عَلَى الْجِهَادِ مَا بَقِينَا أَبَدَا
We are those who have given a pledge to Muḥammad ﷺ that
we will carry on Jihad as long as we live.[30]

Rajaz was also used for war poetry. Tribal wars were a fertile subject for poetry even in the Jāhiliyyah period; it was quite natural that the Arabs would compose poems about the wars they fought under Islām. But as the motives and methods of war changed, so did war poetry. Previously they were showing pride in themselves or their tribe. Now they were singing praises of Islām, its universal teachings, and the Muslim ummah.

MADḤ

The second category, *madḥ* or panegyrics in honor of the Prophet ﷺ, was inspired by the love for the Prophet ﷺ. This was the highest love for any human being in a believer's life, and so was the poetry based on that. Eulogy affected the poet and his poetry. Al-Ṣarṣarī (d. 656/1258) says:

بمديحِه العَطِرِ المُنيفِ تعطّرَتْ   وتطهّرَتْ وتَنوَّرّتْ أَوْزاني
With his sublime, fragrant eulogy,
My rhythms became perfumed, purified, and illuminated.[31]

Quite naturally, it also acquired a religious significance as this verse of al-Būṣīrī (d. 696/1297) shows,

بِمَدْحِ المُصطفى تحْيا القلوبُ   وتُغْتَفَرُ الخَطايا والذُّنوبُ
With praise of the Chosen One (Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ) hearts
are revived
And sins and mistakes are forgiven.[32]

The Ḥadīth master *(ḥāfiẓ)* and historian Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 732/1331) compiled an anthology of eulogies in praise of the Prophet ﷺ consisting of selected works of about two hundred male and female Companion-poets. The book, entitled *Minaḥ al-Madaḥ* (The Gifts of Eulogies), lists each Companion alphabetically, identifying them by name and tribe and quoting a few representative lines of eulogy from each.

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[30] Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الجهاد والسير، باب التحريض على القتال [Book: Jihad, Chapter: Rousing for battle], no. 2871.

[31] Muḥammad, *Al-Madā'iḥ al-Nabawiyyah*, 474.

[32] Ibid., 438.

While every poet tried his hand at *madḥ*—it was unbecoming of a Muslim poet not to do so—there were some who compiled entire anthologies devoted to it. Maḥmūd Sālim Muḥammad in his book *Al-Madā'iḥ al-Nabawiyyah, ḥattā Nihāyat al-ʿAṣr al-Mamlūkī* lists the *dīwāns* (anthologies) of al-Būṣīrī[33], al-Ṣarṣarī[34], Shihāb Maḥmūd[35], al-Witrī[36], al-Buraʿī[37], al-Nawājī[38], al-Fāzāzī[39], and Ibn al-Jayyāb[40] as examples. This was a new phenomenon in Arabic poetry since it was rare that a poet would devote an entire collection to only one type of poem. Further, these eulogies set the record for the longest *qaṣā'id* in Arabic. Al-Būṣīrī's *Hamziyyah* exceeded four hundred verses. Al-Ṣarṣarī's *Nūniyyah* reached nearly eight hundred fifty verses.[41] Additionally, apart from the special-purpose eulogies, even ordinary poems had elements of Prophetic praise in them.

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[33] Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥammād al-Būṣīrī al-Miṣrī (d. 696/1296). His most famous poems are *al-Burdah* and *al-Hamziyyah.*

[34] Yaḥyā ibn Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā al-Anṣārī, known as Abū Zakariyyā, or Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ṣarṣarī (d. 656/1258). His anthology on madḥ is *al-Muntaqā min Madā'iḥ al-Rasūl,* or *al-Mukhtār min Madā'iḥ al-Mukhtār.*

[35] Maḥmūd ibn Salmān ibn Fahd al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, later al-Dimashqī. Abū 'l-Thanā' Shihāb al-Dīn. (d. 725/1325). His *dīwān* of eulogy is called *Ahnā 'l-Manā'iḥ fī Asnā 'l-Madā'iḥ.*

[36] Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr ibn Rashīd Abū ʿAbdullāh Majd al-Dīn al-Witrī (d. 662/1264). His collection of poems praising the Prophet ﷺ is *al-Witriyyāt fī Madḥ Afḍal al-Kā'ināt* (The *witriyyah* collection in praise of the Best in the Universe).

[37] ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Buraʿī al-Yamānī (d. 803/1400).

[38] Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Nawājī Shams al-Dīn (d. 859/1455). His anthology of madaḥ is called *Al-Maṭāliʿ al-Shamsiyyah fī 'l-Madā'iḥ al-Nabawiyyah* (The Risings of the Sun in Panegyrics for the Prophet ﷺ).

[39] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yakhlaftan ibn Aḥmad Abū Zayd al-Fāzāzī al-Qurṭubī. (d. 627/1230). His eulogy of the Prophet is titled *al-ʿAsharāt.*

[40] ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān Abū 'l-Ḥasan ibn al-Jayyāb (d. 749/1349).

[41] Muḥammad, *Al-Madā'iḥ al-Nabawiyyah,* 482–83.

TARGHĪB AND TARHĪB

The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth influenced poetry in another important way: through their overwhelming employment of *targhīb* (persuasion) and *tarhīb* (dissuasion). A new system of life needs to use both persuasion towards the new value system and dissuasion from its opposite. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth are full of both. They constantly remind us of the merits of following a virtuous life and the perils of leading a life of sin. Together the targhīb and tarhīb steer us on the Straight Path through a balance between hope and fear.

Muslim poets absorbed these messages and voiced them in their poetry. The transformation was breathtaking. In the Jāhiliyyah society the poets talked about the joys of sin. They celebrated the pleasures of wine, women, and wars of plunder. Now they started talking about the light of *tawḥīd* (monotheism), and the darkness of *shirk* (polytheism). They started articulating the virtues of chastity, honesty, sacrifice, and piety. Shākir Maḥmūd in his book *Al-Targhīb wa 'l-Tarhīb fi Shiʿr Ṣadr al-Islām* has collected samples of the new poetry on the Islāmic beliefs and practices as it emerged in the early Islāmic period. Like this verse from al-Nābighah al-Jaʿdī (d. ca. 50/670),

الحمْدُ للهَ لا شرَيكَ لَه   مَن لم يَقُلْها فنفسه ظلمَا
All praise is to Allāh. He has no partner.
Whoever did not say this has oppressed his soul.[42]

And this from Ḥassān ibn Thābit ﵁:

وأنت إِلهَ الحقِّ ربِّي وخَالِقي   بذلك ما عُمِّرتُ في النَّاسِ أشهَدُ
لَكَ الخَلقُ والنَّعمَاءُ والأمرُ كُلُّهُ   فإيَّاكَ نَستَهدي وإيَّاكَ نعْبُدُ

And you are the true Deity, my Lord, my Creator.
I will bear witness to that as long as I live among the people.

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[42] Maḥmūd, *Shiʿr Ṣadr al-Islām*, 29.

The creation, the bounties, the command, all belong to You.
From You alone do we seek guidance, You alone do we worship.[43]

They also used poetry to invite people to Islām. Aṣyad ibn Salamah al-Sulamī wrote the following to his father for this purpose:

إِنَّ الَّـذِيْ سَـمَكَ السَّـمَاءَ بِقُدْرَةٍ حَتَّـى عَـلَا فِي مُلْكِـهِ فَتَوَحَّـدَا
بَعَـثَ الَّـذِي مـا مِثْلَهُ فِيْـمَا مَضَى يَدْعُـوْ لِرَحْمَتِـهِ النَّبِـيَّ مُحَمَّـدَا

The One Who raised the sky with His power,
And peaked to such a height in His kingdom that He became unique.
He sent the one the like of whom has never come,
He calls him out of His mercy the Prophet Muḥammad.[44]

His father accepted Islām after receiving this letter.

The incident of Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr (d. 26/645) is well-known. He had written a poem insulting the Prophet ﷺ and had fled. His brother, Bujayr ibn Zuhayr ؓ, had accepted Islām and wrote a poem inviting him to do the same and save himself from the Hellfire. Bujayr's words hit him. Kaʿb ؓ sought forgiveness from the Prophet ﷺ and composed verses in his praise. The Prophet ﷺ forgave him and appreciated his *qaṣīdah*. He turned out to be a great poet who spent the rest of his life using his poetry in the service of Islām. His famous eulogy of the Prophet ﷺ known as *Qaṣīdah Burdah* inspired many, many eulogies.[45]

Sometimes the Muslim poets reprimanded the non-believers directly. ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah ؓ said,

عَصَيْتُم رَسُـولَ اللهِ أُفٍّ لِدينِكُمْ وأمْرِكُمُ السِّيءَ الذِي كَانَ غَاوِيَا

You disobeyed the Messenger of Allāh, woe be to your religion.
And woe to your evil and aberrant way.[46]

Poetry was also used to persuade fellow believers to stay away from sin. Sayyidunā ʿUthmān ؓ said:

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[43] Ibid., 31.

[44] Ibid., 31–32.

[45] Ibid., 29.

[46] Ibid., 73.

تفنى اللذائذُ ممن نالَ صفوتَها   مِنَ الحرامِ ويبقى الإثمُ والعارُ
يلقى عواقبَ سوءٍ من مغَبَّتِها   لا خيرَ في لذةٍ من بعدِها النار

Pleasures vanish from the one who attained (even) the finest of
the ḥarām.
But the sin and ignominy remain.
One faces the evil consequences from them
There is nothing good in the pleasure after which is the Fire.[47]

Sayyidunā ʿAlī ﵁ talked about the importance of proper upbringing of children:

حَرِّضْ بَنِيكَ على الآدابِ فِي الصِغرِ   كيما تقرَّ بِهِم عينَاكَ فِي الكِبَرِ

Urge your children to learn the manners when they are young.
So your eyes will be pleased with them when you are old.[48]

In the African campaign, ʿAbdullāh ibn Jaʿfar ﵁ reminded his fellow mujāhidīn to be steadfast:

وإيّاكمْ أنْ تُولّوا الأدبار فَتَسْتَجِيْبُوا عَذَابَ النار

Beware of turning your backs,
Otherwise you will be responding to the punishment of Fire.[49]

When the verse was revealed urging Muslims to spend in the path of Allāh and calling it a loan to Allāh (al-Baqarah 2:245), Companion Abū ʾl-Daḥdāḥ ﵁ gave the better of his two gardens—a big garden containing six hundred date palms which was also his residence—in charity. To inform his family he recited a poem in which he announced that he had given the loan to Allāh in the hope of getting a big return in the Hereafter and asked them to vacate the garden. In response, his wife composed three extemporary verses to show her joy over this deal.[50]

From this quick sampler we can see that the poets in the early Islāmic period expressed Islāmic ideals—beliefs, acts of worship, morality, jihād, calls to Islām, and so on—in their poetry. It was meant to invite others to Islām, show the truth of Islāmic beliefs and the absurdity of unbelief, and persuade fellow Muslims to do good and avoid evil. It is a fascinating record of how the early Muslims internalized Islāmic teachings and how they expressed them with full conviction. Their poems talk about virtues of ṣalāh, ṣawm, zakāt, and ḥajj, and admonish those who are seen to be a little lax with any of them. They talk about the virtues of chastity, honesty, patience, truth, and justice. They condemn polytheism, disobedience, injustice, and oppression. They challenge the non-believers to reflect on the absurdity of idol worship. Many of these poems are directly influenced by a Qur'ānic verse or a Prophetic saying. Others reflect the new thinking as it arose out of those teachings.

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[47] Ibid., 145.
[48] Ibid., 116.
[49] Ibid., 110.
[50] Ibid., 94–95.

There are even non-Muslim critics who attest to this. Kāmil Farḥān Ṣāliḥ, a Christian Arab literary critic, notes the total change brought out by Islām in all aspects of life, including poetry. For the poets, it changed their vocabulary, their goals, and their values. It introduced topics they had never entertained before. It raised them from the depths of tribalism to the heights of universal human values. Instead of targeting their tribal adversary, they now focused on the Persian and Roman empires. In Jāhiliyyah they attributed fate to time; now they referred to the will of Almighty Allāh Who decides fates, and apportions provisions. The stories of the prophets and previous nations narrated in the Qur'ān widened the scope of Arabic poetry. Qur'ānic phrases and terminology also entered the compositions of poets. Ṣāliḥ gives many examples to substantiate his point.[51]

Similarly, H.A.R. Gibb says: "The influence of the Koran on the development of Arabic Literature has been incalculable, and exerted in many directions. Its ideas, its language, its rhymes pervade all subsequent literary works in greater or lesser measure."[52] Another Orientalist admits: "The decisive step taken by the

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[51] Ṣāliḥ, *Al-Shi'r wa 'l-Dīn*, 120–21.

[52] Gibb, *Arabic Literature*, 37.

Prophethood of Prophet Muḥammad was the destruction of the collective foundation on which the poetry of Jāhiliyyah stood."[53]

IBN KHALDŪN'S OBSERVATIONS

What was built on a new foundation was not only different in its thoughts and feelings, but it was also much superior in its expressive power. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) states: "both the poetry and the prose of the Muslim Arabs are on a higher level of eloquence and literary taste than those of pre-Islāmic Arabs." To illustrate the point he compares poets of the Islamic eras such as Ḥassān ibn Thābit, ʿUmar ibn Abī Rabīʿah, Ḥuṭay'ah, Jarīr, al-Farazdaq, al-Nuṣayyib, Ghaylān dhū 'l-Rummah, and al-Aḥwaṣ, with those of the Jāhiliyyah period, like al-Nābighah, ʿAntarah, Ibn Kulthūm, Zuhayr, ʿAlqamah ibn ʿAbdah, and Ṭarafah ibn al-ʿAbd.[54] He then goes on to explain that this was due to their exposure to the higher form of speech in the Qur'ān and in the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, both of which are inimitable for human beings.

> For that reason it [the higher form of speech in the Qur'ān and in the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ] entered into their hearts. Their souls were brought up on its styles. As a result, their nature was lifted and their faculties for eloquence were elevated far beyond those of the Jāhiliyyah period, who had not listened to it and were not raised up on it.[55]

It could not have been any other way. Islām changed the people's outlook and every aspect of their life. Those worshipping idols and forces of nature started worshipping the One God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Master of the entire universe. From the darkness of sins, aggression, injustice, and oppression they were moved into the light of piety, peace, justice, equality, and morality. From a pathetic state of fragmentation, incessant infighting, and division into tribes, they were transformed into the One Ummah, each member of which strengthened the others. Within a decade they had defeated the two major superpowers of that time and built an empire that would change the course of human history. It is nonsensical that such a revolution of gigantic proportions could have gone hand in hand with the Jāhiliyyah poetry and the values it promoted. Or that it could have occurred without affecting that poetry.

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[53] G. E. von Grunebaum, ed., *Arabic Poetry (theory and development)*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973), quoted in Ṣāliḥ, *Al-Shiʿr wa 'l-Dīn*, 66.

[54] *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, الفصل السابع والخمسون في أن حصول هذه الملكة بكثرة الحفظ وجودتها بجودة المحفوظ [Section 57: The linguistic faculty is obtained through much memorization and its excellence depends upon the excellence of the memorized material], 579–80.

[55] Ibid., 580.

In fact the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth influenced not just Arabic but all languages spoken in Muslim lands. For example Ghulām Musṭafā Khān has listed hundreds of metaphors in Urdu that can be traced to some expression in the Qur'ān or a Prophetic saying.[56] This, in a language that came into existence a thousand years after the Qur'ānic revelation. This, in an area where most people did not understand Arabic. Can we imagine the influence on the people who were the immediate recipients of this awe-inspiring message and who could appreciate and experience the tremendous power of each and every word directly?

What Shiloah and Pellat (with the approval of Bernard Lewis) have claimed is the absurd notion that Muslims turned a deaf ear to Islāmic teachings regarding poetry and that the earth shaking Islāmic revolution had no effect on the people's modes of thinking or their ways of expressing their thoughts. It is even more nonsensical that this failure occurred despite Islām's keen interest to do otherwise. What they have reported about the poetry scene in the Islāmic world is a figment of their imagination. It is quite revealing, not of Islāmic history, but of their mission and zeal. As we shall see in the following pages, their statements about music in Islām are driven by the same impulses.

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[56] Khān, *Urdū main Qur'ān awr Ḥadīth kay Muḥāwarāt.* Ghulām Musṭafā Khan (d. 1426/2005) was a researcher, critic, linguist, educationist, and Sufi from Pakistan. He authored more than seventy books in Urdu and Sindi and was the head of the Urdu department at the University of Sind.

CHAPTER 2

MUSIC BEFORE AND AFTER ISLĀM

SINGING HAS ALWAYS BEEN PART OF HUMAN SOCIETIES. People sing for different reasons and in different ways, with or without instruments to enhance their singing. Some of these are legitimate and others are not. By looking at the many uses of music in the pre-Islāmic world and Islām's attitude about them we can gain a good understanding of Islām's outlook on music and singing. History is not a substitute for a discussion of jurisprudence, but it is a helpful first step.

Ḥudā' and Rajaz

In Arabia it all started with the song of the cameleer, the *ḥudā'*. A good voice was said to enchant the camels and its rhythm was said to pace the camels' steps. A ḥudā' singer could thus speed up the camels through his singing. According to a ḥadīth the impact of sound on camels was discovered accidentally by Muḍar ibn Nizār, the father of the Quraysh. One day he hit the hands of one of his slaves with a stick because the latter had failed to control a camel he was taking care of and the camel had separated from the group. The slave started crying in pain "ya yadāh ya yadāh" (Oh my hands, oh my hands). Surprisingly, the camels were attracted by the cry. Muḍar then said, we could derive some song like this that would benefit the camels and they would stay together. Thus the ḥudā' was born.[1] Other stories say that the camel's pace was increased while listening to the cry.

Ḥudā' singing had been a firmly established practice in the pre-Islāmic period, and it was maintained by the Prophet ﷺ as the following report attests:

> We went out with the Messenger ﷺ to Khaybar and we traveled during the night. A man amongst the people said to ʿĀmir ibn al-Akwaʿ, "Won't you let us hear your poetry?" ʿĀmir was a poet, and so he got down and started chanting,
>
> *O Allāh! Without You we would not have been guided on the right path,*
> *Neither would we have given in charity, nor would we have prayed*
>
> . . .
>
> The Messenger ﷺ said, "Who is that camel driver?" They said, "He is ʿĀmir ibn al-Akwaʿ." He said, "May Allāh bestow His mercy on him."[2]

On the other hand, there are reports that show some restriction on ḥudā' singing. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said to the Companion al-Barā' ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه while he was singing ḥudā': "O Barā'! Let not the women hear your voice."[3] Also he said to Anjashah when wives of the Prophet ﷺ were riding the camels, "*Wayḥak* (May Allāh be merciful to you), O Anjashah! Take it easy, with the glass vessels (women)!"[4] This was a command to be gentle with the women riders. But there was another implication here too as noted by Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (d. 1352/1933):

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[1] Reported in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ذكر تلبيس إبليس على الصوفية في السماع والرقص والوجد [On Iblīs' confounding of the Sufis in regard to samāʿ, dance, and ecstasy], 196.

[2] Salamah ibn al-Akwaʿ رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب المغازي، باب غزوة خيبر [Book: Expeditions, Chapter: Khaybar Expedition], no. 4245.

[3] Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه in al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿUmmāl*, الإكمال من كتاب اللهو واللعب والتغني من قسم الأقوال [Book: Amusement, play, and singing], no. 40635, 15:215.

[4] Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الأدب، باب ما جاء في قول الرجل ويلك [Book: Etiquettes, Chapter: What was said about one's saying *waylak*], no. 6231.

> It has been said that glass vessels refers to women. Just like glass vessels can be broken by small impact, so the hearts of women can be affected by little things. And since you have a beautiful voice, they should not hear your voice lest their hearts be tempted by it.[5]

Anyone who knows what is happening at the "Islāmic concerts" in Europe and America (see chapter 11 about the hijab-clad girls dancing to the voice of a singer in an Islāmic charity concert) can readily appreciate the significance of this statement.

The power of *rajaz,* as we saw in the first chapter, was in the words. Ḥudā', on the other hand, depended upon the quality of the singer's voice. That is why it required experienced cameleers. That is also why it called for some caution.

Apart from ḥudā' and rajaz Islām permitted wedding and Eid songs, with restrictions.

The Many Uses of Music

There were other uses of singing and music that Islām shunned. One of them had to do with superstitions. As music historians tell us, music's association with magic and superstitions is very old. When faced with disasters or epidemics, pagan people resorted to dance and music to get rid of the evil spirits. Musical instruments were often made from parts of human bodies and were supposed to produce magical effects. Flutes were made from bones and drums from human skin.[6] The legend of the Pied Piper, popular in the West for centuries, attests to the belief in the magical powers of music. Pagan Arabia was no exception. There, singing girls sang to conjure rain when they were hit by a dry spell. Two singing girls of the ʿĀd people called *al-jarādatān* are mentioned as the first singers who used to sing for this purpose.[7] It was thought that the magic of their singing would help bring the much-needed rain from the clouds. Islām eliminated this practice through a simple substitute; it taught its followers to turn to Allāh in *ṣalāt al-istisqā'* to pray for rain.

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[5] Al-Kashmīrī, *Fayḍ al-Bārī,* كتاب الأدب، باب ما يجوز من الشعر والرجز والحداء [Book: Etiquettes, Chapter: What is permitted in poetry, rajaz, and ḥudā'], 4:396. While some commentators have said that the Prophetic instruction was for slowing down the camels, others including Imām Nawawī in his commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and Ibn al-Athīr in *Al-Nihāyāh fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth* have given the same interpretation as mentioned by Mawlānā Kashmīrī.

[6] Etzkorn, ed., *Music and Society,* 44.

Historically, another well established use of music has been as a means of indoctrination and glorification. Trumpets used to be blown to announce the arrival of His Majesty and to make people bow to his pomp and glory. Sociologist Honigshiem writes:

> Loud noises made by trumpets, shrill sounding oboes, and drums are made so that everyone hears the approach of the powerful monarch. Such glorification is almost always connected with the intent of indoctrinating and educating the masses to defer to their gods and to selected persons.[8]

If Islām had looked at music as being a neutral tool then the person most deserving of this honor would have been none other than the Prophet ﷺ. But to a world used to the courts of monarchs with musicians always ready to glorify them, it introduced a drastically different court. No pomp, no musicians, no music. As Ibn Khaldūn explains, Islām taught an aversion to pomp:

> One of the tokens of royal authority is the display of banners and flags and the beating of drums and the blowing of trumpets and horns . . . The Muslims, however, refrained from beating drums and blowing trumpets at the beginning of Islām. They wanted to avoid the bawdiness of royal authority and do without royal customs. They also despised pomp, which has nothing whatever to do with the truth.[9]

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[7] Al-Ḥasanī, *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 27.

[8] Etzkorn, ed., *Music and Society*, 44.

[9] *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, الباب الثالث، الفصل السادس والثلاثون : في شارات الملك والسلطان الخاصة به [Chapter 3, Section 36: The characteristic emblems of royal and government authority], 237–38.

It would change later, as khilāfah turned into monarchy and started to look at other monarchies for ideas to enjoy this life and flaunt the splendor and luxury of this world. At that time, "Persian and Byzantine clients, subjects of the preceding (pre-Islāmic) dynasties, mixed with them and showed them their ways of ostentation and luxury."[10]

Music was also a weapon of war. When the pagan Makkan army was marching to Badr in 2 AH, it included not only fighting men, weapons, camels, and horses, but also the means of inciting the fighters: singing girls and musical instruments. At every rest stop along the way these cheerleaders plied their craft, spitting venom against the Muslims and promising their favors in the most enticing ways to those who would destroy them. Their leader, Abū Jahl, had grand designs for what seemed to be an easy victory. He swore:

> By Allāh we will not return, until we reach Badr and spend three days there in slaughtering, feasting, drinking wine, and listening to the singing and playing of the singing girls . . .[11]

In the end, the unequal war in Badr did not turn out to be the picnic he had imagined. Abū Jahl was slain, as were many other prominent leaders of Makkah. While the Muslims drastically lacked the weapons of war, it was the absence of this particular weapon of war that symbolizes the moral edge that gave them the victory: unlike their adversaries the Muslim army did not include bands of singing girls and musical instruments.

There is no doubt that such bands could and did stir up emotions. Ibn Khaldūn describes how music has historically been used in battle, where singers equipped with drums, trumpets, and other musical instruments were employed to move the souls of fighters and cause them to be willing to die: "The origin of it all is the cheerfulness created in the soul through music. Valor results from it as it does from drunkenness."[12]

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[10] Ibid., 238.

[11] Ibn Hishām (d. 213/828), *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, غزوة بدر الكبرى : نجاة أبي سفيان بالعير [The Battle of Badr: Abū Sufyān escapes with the caravan], 1:365.

Muslims did face armies psyched up on music and singing girls. After Badr we see it again at Uḥud, where the chant of the singing girls was: "Move forward and we will embrace you . . . Turn back and we will abandon you."[13] In countless pagan wars before and since, the promise has been the same. It works for the lowly beasts seeking the sensual pleasures of this world by fanning the fires of their basest emotions and bringing out the animal from within them. No wonder battlefields have historically showcased the worst of human behavior and character.

Islām came to rid humanity of such decay. It produced soldiers who fought to establish justice and morality and sought nothing but the pleasure of Allāh. Their weapons were piety, sincerity, fear of Allāh, an unshakable commitment to right the wrong, and an unwavering willingness to sacrifice even their lives for it. Quite naturally Islām removed the filth of singing girls and musical instruments from its side of the war zone.

Singing and music as pure entertainment were also part of the scene in pagan Arabia. This enterprise revolved around the *qaynah* or the slave girl who worked in a tavern or a rich man's home. She was a waitress serving wine, songstress, and prostitute rolled into one. Islām dealt the *qaynahs* a blow even before the conquest of Makkah. In the famous incident involving Sayyidunā Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Baltaʿah رضي الله عنه that has been referred to in Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah (60:1–3), we learn of the arrival of a songstress named Sārah in Madīnah who had fallen upon bad times. According to al-Qurṭubī, Sārah came to Madīnah when the Messenger ﷺ was preparing for the conquest of Makkah. He asked her what had brought her there. She answered that she was facing very difficult times as her patrons had been killed in Badr. She was looking for

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12. *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, الباب الثالث ، الفصل السادس والثلاثون : في شارات الملك والسلطان الخاصة به [Chapter 3, Section 36: The characteristic emblems of royal and government authority], 237.

13. Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, غزوة أحد : أبو سفيان وامرأته يحرضان قريشا [The Battle of Uḥud: Abū Sufyān and his wife incite the Quraysh], 2:44.

financial help. The Messenger ﷺ asked, "What happened to the youth of Makkah (who frequented her and spent money on her)?" She said, "I have not been asked for anything since Badr." [14]

Finally, there was the use of professional music as a distraction. It was introduced to counter the "Islāmic threat." Historian al-Masʿūdī (d. 346/957) reports that it was Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 2 AH) who introduced *ʿūd*-playing to Arabia by importing it from Persia. His purpose was to lure the people away from listening to the Qur'ān. Al-Masʿūdī writes:

> From the ghinā' Quraysh knew only the *naṣb*,[15] until Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith . . . went to Chosroes in al-Ḥīrah where he learned to play the *ʿūd* and sing with it. He came back to Makkah and taught its inhabitants.[16]

As other accounts tell us he also imported songstresses from there.

Islām permitted use of singing to lighten the burden of labor and travel, to fight loneliness, and in weddings and Eid celebrations. It shunned its use for devotion and worship, for superstitions and magic, for pomp and glory, for vain and sinful entertainment, and as a weapon of war. Rajaz was allowed, even encouraged, in war; singing girls and sensuous songs were not. A poet did walk in front of the Prophet ﷺ reciting his eulogy during the pilgrimage in Makkah; but no horns or trumpets were used. And no bands were playing when Muslims entered Makkah victoriously.

We can understand the change in attitude Islām caused by reflecting on the agreed upon ḥadīth reports that show some permissibility for singing. In the reports about weddings, we find that Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها had seen off a bride without any singing and the Prophet ﷺ reminded her that it should have been done and that the *Anṣār* were used to it. In the reports about Eid day singing by little girls and chanting and display of spears by the

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[14] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah, verse 1, 20:396–97.

[15] Naṣb was a variant of ḥudā'.

[16] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, "أول الغناء في العرب" [The first ghinā' among the Arabs], 4:196. Al-Ḥīrah was in the Lakhmides kingdom, which was under the Sassanians.

Abyssinians, we find Sayyidunā Abū Bakr and Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنهما, respectively, criticizing the act. Why did Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها and other ladies present at the wedding not think of wedding songs? Why did both Abū Bakr and ʿUmar رضي الله عنهما criticize the singing? Because they were aware of Islām's general prohibition of music and singing and were not aware of the limited exceptions for these particular occasions.

The best indication of how they understood the Prophetic words and actions is their own conduct afterwards. It is well known that none of the Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn cared to become a "patron of the arts." They loved poetry, listened to it, and even hummed it in privacy. But they shunned ghinā' beyond this and made sure that people did not engage in it publicly. Here is a report from Bayhaqī:

> Whenever ʿUmar رضي الله عنه heard the sound (of singing) or a *duff* (being played) he would ask: What is this? If they answered that it was a wedding or circumcision he would keep quiet.[17]

Their attitude about singing and music—as about any other thing—reflected the gold standard for Islāmic behavior. Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī (d. 656/1258) writes:

> Singing with *ṭarab* was never the practice of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and it was never done in his presence. Patronizing of singers or showing any interest in them is not part of his life example or that of his successors or from that of his Companions or his family . . . And therefore it is from among the new things that are an innovation and an error. Only those will feign not seeing this in whom base desires have taken control.[18]

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[17] Ibn Sīrīn in al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, كتاب الصداق، ٧٣ - باب ما يستحب من إظهار النكاح [Book: Dowry, Chapter 73: The preferable way of announcing marriage], no. 14697, 7:473.

[18] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 84.

The Age of Kings

Things changed later as a result of historic developments. Ibn Khaldūn has made some pertinent comments on the sociology of this change. He explains that economic prosperity, resulting in a combination of leisure and wealth, leads to a greater interest in music, which "is sought only by those who are free from all other worries and seek various ways of having pleasure."[19] This is what happened in the Muslim world. The Arabs originally had only poetry, which they made the archive of their history, their wisdom, their nobility, and their eloquence. Islām shunned indulgence in luxuries and music, "with its emphasis on leaving the states of leisure and whatever is of no utility in one's religion or livelihood." But it came later with the conquests:

> Then, luxury and prosperity came to them, because they obtained the spoils of the nations. They moved on to elegant and fine living and to an appreciation of leisure. The singers now left the Persians and Byzantines. They descended upon the Ḥijaz and became clients of the Arabs.[20]

The observation that luxuries and indulgences (music foremost among them) were foreign elements that came with the affluence brought by the spread of Islāmic conquests is true. But it is only partly true. A degradation in the caliber of rulers was also a factor. Muslims had conquered from Iran to Egypt during the time of ʿUmar ﵁. It is amazing, and just one reflection of the greatness of ʿUmar ﵁, that these conquests could not make a difference in the society during his time. Or even for at least forty years afterwards.

THE UMAWĪ PERIOD (41–132 / 661–750)

The corruption began in the Umawī period when increased wealth met lack of piety. The motive was pleasure and sin. As the desires for this music lay outside Islām, so did the sources for fulfilling it. These were Persia and Byzantium. Al-Ḥīrah, in Byzantium, was the major source of singers and music teachers. Nashīṭ and Sā'ib Khāthir (d. 63/682), prominent singers of the period, were Persians. Shiloah admits, "Al-Ḥīrah probably continued under Islām to be a musical centre that provided a model for musicians, poets and their patrons."[21]

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[19] *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, الباب الخامس، الفصل الثاني والثلاثون: في صناعة الغناء [Chapter 5, Section 32: The craft of ghinā'], 396.

[20] Ibid., 397–98.

Al-Masʿūdi blames Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah (d. 64/683) for his love of music. He writes, "The iniquities of Yazīd dominated his companions and staffers. During his days ghinā' appeared in Makkah and Madīnah and musical instruments were used."[22] There are other reports that contradict it and there is a great possibility that this report is part of the politically motivated propaganda campaign against Yazīd. However the very fact that he would be so blamed is sufficient to tell us about the attitude of the society about the patronage of this art and the "Great Musical Tradition."

There are signs of unease with this within the royal court as well. The fourth Umawī khalīfah Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam (d. 65/685) arrested *mukhannaths*. The mukhannath Ṭuways (d. 92/711) (celebrated by Farmer and other Orientalists) disappeared and remained so until his death. He could not come out even after the death of Marwān. Marwān's son and successor ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān (d. 86/705) banned music. The latter's son Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 99/718) ordered the mukhannaths to be castrated after hearing one of them sing in his military encampment.

ʿUMAR IBN ʿABD AL-ʿAZĪZ: THE GOLD STANDARD

Things changed drastically when ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 101/720) became khalīfah. Being an insider he was acutely aware of all the problems that had crept into the royal court and the Muslim society in general and was determined to address them. It is generally known that before becoming khalīfah he led a luxurious life. However it was his actions after assuming khilāfah that earned him the respect of history and the title of Fifth Rightly

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[21] Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islām*, 13.

[22] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj al-Dhahab*, "فسوق يزيد وعماله" [Iniquities of Yazīd and his staffers], 3:69.

Guided Khalīfah. During the two and a half years of his rule people saw once again the blessings of Islām—when practiced honestly. Everyone could taste the sweet fruits of justice, security, happiness, and economic prosperity that his piety and integrity had brought. His success in poverty elimination alone is legendary; it was during his time that it became difficult to find a recipient for zakāt charity. It is a measure of his overall impact on the direction of the society that he is considered to be the first reviver of Islām. Naturally, his attitude toward music is of great importance to us. We have already seen how he dealt with two poets in Madīnah whose corrupting influence was of particular concern. He took similar actions to deal with the issue of music. His letter to his son's teacher Sahal is quite revealing of his awareness and his concern in this matter. He wrote:

> The first thing that your instruction should instill in their hearts is the hatred of musical instruments; their beginning is from Shayṭān and their end is the anger of Al-Raḥmān (the Most Merciful). For it has come to me from reliable scholars that attending to instruments and listening to songs and fondness for them breed hypocrisy in the heart like water grows grass.[23]

In other words realizing the adverse effects of music and staying away from it is a prerequisite for proper education. No one can accuse Sayyidunā ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz of being oblivious to the beauties of finer things in life; before becoming khalīfah he was a trendsetter for them. He was no stranger to the charms of poetry or singing. But he knew something more. His instruction to the teacher was based on his knowledge of both music and of Islāmic teachings about it. He moved on to say that a wise person would find it easy to stop listening to music. His letter to his governors directing them to curb the use of music is also indicative of his concerns. It included these comments and instructions:

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[23] ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, quoted in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, tafsīr of Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 11:620–21. Cf. Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā, *Dhamm al-Malāhī*, no. 20, 40–41.

> The Persians were used to entertainment using things that Shayṭān had made attractive for them . . . So admonish against those futilities and distractions of ghinā' and the like. And if they persist then punish them within limits.[24]

Here was a clear statement that music was a foreign influence that Muslims could do without. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz died early in his rule. After him the Umawīs went back to their old ways. Music and other vices returned. But there was no doubt about what was right and what was not. This re-establishment of the gold standard is his lasting legacy.

A quarter century later we find a reverberation of this in the statement of Yazīd III (d. 126/744). His predecessor Walīd ibn Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, known as Walīd the Sinner, indulged in drinking, entertainment, and music unlike any previous Umawī ruler and was deposed and beheaded because of the excessiveness of his debauchery. Yazīd III cleansed the royal court of the vices that his predecessor had introduced there. He said:

> Banū Umayyah, beware of ghinā'. It decreases *ḥayā* (sense of shame and decency), increases lust, destroys one's sense of honor, leads to drinking, and has the same impact as drinking. And if you are going to do it anyway, then protect your women from it. For ghinā' is the charm for fornication.[25]

THE ʿABBĀSĪ PERIOD (132–656 / 750–1258)

The ʿAbbāsīs brought the capital to Baghdād from Damascus, and thereby closer to Persia. The Persian influence was seen in many aspects of the ʿAbbāsī court, music included. This foreign influence went right down to the administrative details.[26] It was during the ʿAbbāsī period that court sponsorship of music reached unprecedented heights.

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[24] ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, quoted in Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, الطبقة الثالثة من أهل المدينة من التابعين، ١٨٢٠ عمر بن عبد العزيز [The Third Generation from the Successors from the People of Madīnah, Bio. no. 1820: ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz], 7:381.

[25] Quoted in al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, tafsīr of Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 11:620; al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿb al-Īmān*, no. 4754, 7:111.

[26] Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islām*, 8.

But more than just entertainment and emulation of the Sassanian emperors was at work here. Having a good songwriter and singer on your side served some political goals as well. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī was the first singer who sang for Hārūn al-Rashīd after the latter ascended the throne. He sang,

When darknesses in the lands covered us,
Then came Imām Hārūn as a light for it.
With Hārūn justice was established among us,
Injustice receded and hope expanded.

A servant cried from behind the curtain, "Ibrāhīm, beautiful poetry and beautiful singing." And Hārūn al-Rashīd gave him 20,000 dirhams.[27] According to another report, he sang,

Did not you see that the sun was sick?
When Hārūn ascended the throne, it brightened.

Hārūn gave him a lavish gift of 100,000 dirhams and his vizier Yaḥyā al-Barmakī who had also been praised in that poem, gave him another 50,000 dirhams.[28] Regardless of which event occurred first, we can surmise that the money for both came from the "public relations budget," so to speak. After all, jingles have a way of getting on to people's lips. There may not be much poetic value in these verses but it was good advertising.

Despite knowing its entertainment and propaganda value, and being eager to employ it, they knew the "art" was tainted. It is reported that Hārūn al-Rashīd received a fatwa for the permissibility of ghinā' from Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd (d. 183/800). Hārūn al-Rashīd said to him, "I have received reports that Imām Mālik declares ghinā' to be prohibited." Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd responded, "Is it up to Mālik to declare things as being permissible or prohibited?"[29]

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[27] Al-ʿĀmilī. *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām,* 120.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Al-Ḥasanī, *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām,* 56. While Imām Mālik (94–179 AH) was a recognized authority in fiqh and Ḥadīth, the comment does apply to

While this report affirms Imām Mālik's stand, we can be sure that the response of Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd did not really convince anyone. How else can we explain Ma'mūn's statement about Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī's son Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī (d. 235/850), "Were he not so publicly known for his singing, I would have made him a *qāḍī*." [30]

Ibn Khaldūn's advice to a prince reveals the same awareness of the public view of singing and singers. He writes,

> I once censured a royal prince for being so eager to learn to sing and for being crazy to play the strings. I told him, "It it is not appropriate for you and it does not befit your position." He said, "Did not you see Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī, who was the leader of this craft and best singer in his time?" I replied: "*Subḥānallāh*, why do you not rather follow the example of his father or his brother? Do you not see how that pursuit prevented Ibrāhīm from attaining their position?" The prince however was deaf to my criticism and turned away. And Allāh guides whomever He wills.[31]

Ibrāhīm had briefly been proclaimed khalīfah in Baghdād. But his extreme indulgence in music cost him public support. A poet Diʿbil wrote, what good could be expected from a khalīfah "who had made the *barbaṭ* (lute) his Qur'ān." [32] Ibrāhīm fled and went into hiding when al-Ma'mūn came to Baghdād with his troops. For the next eighteen months al-Ma'mūn banished music from the court.

The second ʿAbbāsī khalīfah, Abū Jaʿfar al-Manṣūr (d. 158/775) had no love for singers and musicians. He once saw a slave girl playing a *ṭunbūr* (mandolin) and broke the instrument on her head. Much later we find al-Qāhir Billāh banning songstresses and

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Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd himself. Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī said, "Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd was not qualified to give fatwa." (*Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 56).

[30] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā'*, s.v. "الطبقة الثانية عشرة : إسحاق النديم" [Section: The Twelfth Generation, Biography: Isḥāq al-Nadīm], 11:120.

[31] *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, "المقدمة في فضل علم التاريخ" [Introduction to the merit of the study of history], 28.

[32] Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, حرف الميم: ٣١٣٨ - إبراهيم بن محمد المهدي [Letter: Mīm, Bio. no. 3138 - Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Mahdī], 7:68.

wine. That was in 321/933. Under his orders, both free and slave singers of both genders were arrested and expelled to Baṣra and Kūfa. He also banned sale of slave girls as songstresses; they could only be sold as plain, unskilled in singing.[33] This, we can imagine, would have ended all economic incentive for training one's slave girls in music.

Thus we can see that even in the ʿAbbāsī court there were reservations about "The Great Tradition" and its patronage. It was a vice, like other vices of the royal court. Ultimately these vices would be the undoing of the dynasty. A glimpse of the destructive power of music can be seen in the story of Isḥāq al-Mawṣilī's student-turned-rival Ziryāb (d. 238/852) who took music to North Africa and Spain after Isḥāq asked him to leave Baghdād. Ziryāb's first stop was in Qayrawān. This historic city was known for knowledge, piety and virtue. After his arrival some of its inhabitants turned to music and entertainment such that the city was divided into two neighborhoods: Ḥayy al-Ziryābī (Ziryābī neighborhood) and Ḥayy al-Zuhhād (The neighborhood of the pious). Ḥayy al-Ziryābī was the center for singers and entertainers with Ziryāb as the leader.[34] Interestingly this also shows that the Zuhhād (one of the early titles for the Sufis) there had not discovered Sufi samāʿ.

Other Muslim cities may not have developed such stark divisions, but the corrosive affect of music and entertainment was undeniable. Ibn Khaldūn describes five stages of a dynasty, with the fifth being a stage "of waste and squandering. In this stage the ruler wastes on pleasures and amusements what his predecessors had accumulated."[35]

It can only go downhill from this slippery slope. We can see the roots of the fall of Baghdād in the growing interest in pleasure and amusement, which continued up to the last minute. The last ʿAbbāsī khalīfah Mustaʿṣim was probably still enjoying the company of his musician and boon companion Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Urmawī (d. 694/1295), when Helugu's armies were knocking at the doors of Baghdād. Incidentally Helugu must have appreciated the musician's role in the success of his campaign; while al-Mustaʿṣim was brutally murdered and the entire city devastated, al-Urmawī was honored by the Mongol invader.

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[33] Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kamil fī 'l-Tārīkh*, "سنة ٣٢١" [Year 321 AH], 7:92.

[34] Al-ʿĀmilī, *Al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 138.

[35] *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, الباب الثالث ، الفصل السابع عشر : في أطوار الدولة واختلاف أحوالها وخلق أهلها باختلاف الأطوار [Chapter 3, Section 17: The stages of dynasties and how attitude differs among the people in the different stages], 164.

This lesson of history was beautifully captured in the famous Urdu verse by poet Iqbal (d. 1357/1938):

> Come, let me tell you the fate of nations.
> Swords and shields in the beginning; flutes and strings in the end.

The Music Debate in History

There are two distinct currents in the history of music in the Muslim world. First, there was ghinā', the sensuous music for fun and entertainment sponsored by kings. While poetry was the Arabs' own product, this music was imported, first from Persia and Byzantium, then from Greece. The kings patronized not only singers and songstresses, but also music theoreticians like Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. 256/870), and Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). After the fall of Baghdād, "the golden era of music" came to an end. To be sure various kings and sultāns, in Turkey, India, Irān, and central Asia, did sponsor court musicians from time to time, but neither the intensity nor the impact of their engagement was at the levels of the ʿAbbāsī courts. Needless to say, whatever transpired in the courts of the later Umawīs, the ʿAbbāsīs, or the Mughals in terms of singing girls or use of musical instruments had nothing to do with Islām.

However around that time "the golden era of Sufism" was starting. The major Sufi orders—Qādiriyyah, Chishtiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, and Naqshbandiyyah—took form in that period. These were associated with Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), Khawājah Muʿīn al-Dīn Chishtī Ajmeri (d. 633/1236), Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), and Bahā' al-Dīn al-Naqshbandī (d. 791/1389), respectively.[36] They gave a boost to the second current, which consists in the spiritual songs of the Sufis, variously referred to as *qawl, samā'*, or *qawwālī*. It started with the noble intentions of harnessing the power of music to achieve spiritual fulfillment, but degenerated into the other kind, precisely as the elders had warned. Oblivious to the nature of the enterprise, those who took this path could not hold their balance and joined the multitudes who fell off the slippery stone.

Many who joined this current had nothing to do with Sufism. They were simply looking for fun and found in samā' a useful excuse for it. In a way they tried to merge the Ḥayy al-Ziryābī and Ḥayy al-Zuhhād, while keeping the signboards that claimed it to be the latter. In the Indian subcontinent it was the Chishtiyyah order that showed a special interest in qawwālī. In Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and the Balkans it was the Mawlawis that turned to dance as well and were known as Whirling Dervishes. Interestingly they referred to this dance as "sema." In both cases samā' deteriorated to the lowest level at the hands of the followers, with little resemblance to the samā' advocated in the Sufi writings.

The first current was sustained, like other court vices, through royal power and was treated as such. Given the obvious charms, temptations, and perils of music, a very large number of scholars of all persuasions, in all Muslim lands, all through the centuries, have been speaking out against this indulgence. They challenged those who tried to justify it and admonished those who practiced it. Many wrote entire books or epistles on the subject.

The much-publicized music debate is centered on the second current. There were those who opposed extending the permissibility of ghinā' beyond the special occasions specified in the source texts. On the other hand there were some who justified the Sufi samā' by doing just that. Much has been made of this controversy, especially because of the use of strong words by some participants giving an impression of an unbridgeable chasm between the two groups. But this was essentially a defense of samāʿ within stringent limits. While extrapolating from the permissible singing they did caution about the dangers of the slippery stone. Further, even this defense belongs to an intermediate period in the history of Sufism. As we shall see in chapter 8, this was abandoned by the latter Sufis as they saw problems even with a cautionary approach.

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[36] The Chishtī Order had started earlier, Khawājah Abū Isḥāq Shāmī Chishtī (d. 329/940) being the first Sufi master to be known as a Chishtī. However it was Khawājah Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī who was responsible for its vast spread.

In appendix 2 we look at the books written to condemn music followed by those justifying samāʿ. These books were written by well-known authorities belonging to all schools of fiqh, in every Muslim land, all through the centuries. Together these books cover nearly the entire music debate in Muslim history. This timeline of books on music is an important part of Islāmic history and is very helpful in understanding the issue in its broader context. The common ground between all these books is the prohibition of most musical instruments, mixed gatherings, emulation of secular music, vain amusement and entertainment, and anything having any sensual dimensions. None of them praises the professional singer, whose expertise is in the censured ṭarab-producing ghināʾ. There is recognition, even by the supporters of samāʿ, of its potentially very destructive consequences—resulting in many restrictions and cautions. At the same time they agree on the permissibility of poetry (if the text is morally clean), poetic recitals, and instrument-free personal singing. It shows that what has been painted as a never ending controversy actually contains within it a huge consensus. A few such as Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī stood outside the consensus. We look at their arguments in a separate chapter.

Musician in the Muslim Society

We will conclude this chapter by looking at the historic attitude of the Muslim society toward the musician. The term "artist" is of a recent vintage. It came during the colonial period from English and other European languages. The Muslim society's original term for the male professional singer was mukhannath.[37] It means an effeminate man. While some men were called mukhannath because they were castrated, others were called so because they behaved like women. This term announced that it was unmanly to be a professional singer. Of course it was unimaginable that a free woman would sing for others. Professional singing was done by the *qaynah*, the slave girl, and as we saw earlier Islām did not give her any prestige or encouragement. The society held them in contempt.

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[37] Al-Manbijī, *Risālah*, 26.

THE DESPISED MUKHANNATH

As for the mukhannaths, they were condemned by the Prophet ﷺ in no uncertain terms. Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ reports:

> The Prophet ﷺ cursed the effeminate men and masculine women and said, "Expel them from your homes."[38]

It was impossible for the mukhannath to become a celebrity artist in the society. The first professional singer in Arabia was a person whose wretchedness was proverbial. He was Ṭuways the Mukhannath (d. 92/711), a client of Banū Makhzūm. He is quoted as saying,

> I am the most wretched person who walks on the face of the earth. My mother gave birth to me the day the Messenger of Allāh died. She weaned me the day Abū Bakr died. I reached adolescence the day ʿUmar was martyred. I married the day ʿUthmān was martyred. My child was born the day ʿAlī was martyred.[39]

This public acknowledgement of wretchedness led to the Arabic proverb *ash'am min Ṭuways* (more unlucky than Ṭuways). Another proverb *akhnath min Ṭuways* (more effeminate than Ṭuways) is a good indication of the station of the singer.

Centuries later we find the *Fatāwā al-Tātārkhāniyyah* declaring that a person using musical instruments considered improper by the general public, like the ṭunbūr and ʿūd, will lose his status as an upright person. He could not appear as a witness in an Islāmic court. Public opinion was not the basis of the ruling; only an indicator of where it was applicable. This legal verdict also confirms that the general public considered musical instruments bad and held those who used them in contempt.

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[38] Ibn ʿAbbās ؓ in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. كتاب اللباس ، باب إخراج المتشبهين بالنساء من البيوت [Book: Dress, Chapter: Expelling the men imitating women from the homes], no. 5947.

[39] Al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 51.

The same can be gleaned from the apology of Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī for music, in which he is very bitter about the "ignorant masses that reject samāʿ." Much later ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī also complains about the "ignorant masses and ignorant ʿulamā', who reject samāʿ."

The same public attitude is evident in the Indian subcontinent where the terms for singers and musicians were *mīrāthī, gawayyah, dūm,* and *kanjar.* The first refers to a people who were jesters and singers but these are all pejoratives of varying degree. The last one is even used as an expletive, although as the authoritative *Fayrūz al-Lughāt* Urdu dictionary states, it is the name of a clan of professional musicians. It is telling that in early twentieth century singers made it a point to identify themselves as amateurs (*shawqiyah fankār*) to keep their distance from the despised professional.

Things began to change drastically during the colonial period when Muslims were at their lowest level militarily, economically, and spiritually. The shift in attitude was also related to the magical powers of technology. Colonialism and the media revolution changed our perceptions and our norms thereby letting cultural imperialism reach unprecedented heights. The "artist" became a celebrity, replacing the *mīrāthī* or other pejorative titles. We examine this transformation in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

MUSIC AND THE MEDIA REVOLUTION

IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, EUROPEAN COLONIAL powers gained control of the Muslim world. At the same time, new technologies, including media technologies, started to arrive from Europe and were cleverly employed in the service of the colonial empires. This happened at a time when European attitudes about music were also changing under the impact of the media and the industrial revolution. The change in the social status of musicians in Europe is a good indicator of this transformation. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries monarchs had made their musicians eat with the serfs and wear the same attire as the valets.[1] Then in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the media companies built their own fortunes by creating "celebrities" out of musicians and lavishly offering them fame and fortune.

The technological revolution in the media that started in the nineteenth century had capitalist greed as its motivator and Renaissance hedonism and materialism as its moral philosophy. In invading the Muslim world, it also had the military and political power of the colonial empires as its protector. The combination of these factors opened the floodgates and irretrievably altered the landscape of Islām. Military power was used to conquer bodies, media power to conquer souls. Western pop culture, with music as its most important component, began its domination of the Muslim world as a result of this two-pronged attack.[2]

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[1] Etzkorn, ed., *Music and Society*, 105.

First it was the gramophone. Then radio and film. In the 1960s, the radio's spread increased exponentially with the invention of the transistor. The television, the personal computer, the Internet, and the mobile phone then came in quick succession to continue this cultural carpet-bombing of the whole world. To understand the aftermath, we need to go back and see how it happened.

Gramophone: The Making of Gauhar Jān

Invented in 1887, the gramophone made its commercial debut around 1897. Soon it started to spread throughout the British Empire courtesy of Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd (GTL) of the UK. In India it arrived in 1902, just a year after the development of wax recordings. It was such a huge marketing success that GTL would later form its wholly owned subsidiary, the Gramophone Company of India or GCI. Ruth Woodsmall, who had been on assignment to visit the Muslim world and monitor its cultural, social, and religious state, wrote some time later, "Phonographs in Syria are such a commonplace that lemonade sellers carry them around going full blast, as they circulate selling their wares."[3] The same could be said of Egypt, Turkey, Iran, or any other place in the British Empire.

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[2] It may be argued that the changes brought about by the new media were inevitable and would have happened whether or not colonialism was there. However this claim is discounted by two irrefutable facts. 1) The new media was deployed under the supervision of the colonial masters and with their enthusiastic support. 2) The colonial powers engaged actively in exerting their hegemony in the realm of culture. For example Nandi Bhatia chronicles how Shakespeare was imposed by the British Raj throughout India through educational curriculums, Civil Service exams, and stage dramas to serve as an icon of British cultural superiority. (See Nandi Bhatia, "'Shakespeare' and the Codes of Empire in India," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 18, Post-Colonial Discourse in South Asia (1998), pp. 96–126.) What seems to be the irresistible logic of new media technology has been made "irresistible" by our colonial experience which contains few examples of resistance or independent thinking.

[3] Woodsmall, *Muslim Women Enter a New World*, 26.

To explore the market and establish its operations GTL sent a representative on an "expedition" to India. Like other expeditions of European nations, this was also a journey to a "dark continent" to appropriate its wealth and "civilize" its people. "There will be big business done here," promised an internal memo.[4] At that time, India was in the grip of a plague caused by poor sanitation as the "civilizing" job did not include providing good sanitation to the public. Twelve to fourteen thousand people were dying of the plague every week. However it was a plague of a different kind that the civilizers were bringing to India through this expedition.

The GTL representative arrived in India in late 1902 and did not take long to discover the perfect candidate for their recording business: Gauhar Jān (d. 1930 AC), an Armenian Jewess born as Angelina Yeoward in India, who was a *ṭawā'if* (prostitute) and knew all the tricks of the trade. She and her mother nominally converted to Islām after her mother got a divorce. But they were denizens of the ***kothās*** (red-light districts) of Calcutta. Then as now, the ***kothā*** was the center of sin and crime. While there were volunteer entries like them, many denizens of the ***kothā*** were recruited through kidnapping as well as purchasing the unwanted daughter, who was then trained to sing, dance, and provide sensual pleasures. From such houses of corruption and ill-fame came the first commercial recording artist of India.

Without the gramophone, Gauhar Jān would have spent her life in the ***kothās*** of Calcutta or the courts of the Nawabs. But with it she entered into the mainstream of Indian society. The transformation from *ṭawā'if* to a celebrity was the wonderwork of technology, assisted by the capital and power of the Empire.

The gramophone brought the ***kothā*** to the living room of the middle class. And it did it with much fanfare and great success. The business was so good that in 1908 GCI set up ***bājākhāna***, a pressing factory in Calcutta to produce discs locally. (Before that the discs were being manufactured in Germany.) Within a few years the *bājākhāna* was manufacturing discs and assembling machines, not only for India, but also Burma, Ceylon, the Dutch East Indies, the Malay States, Siam, Hong Kong, and China. By 1910 GCI had released more than four thousand recordings.

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[4] Farrel, "The Early Days of the Gramophone Industry in India," 59.

MARKETING CAMPAIGN

One crucial element in GCI's strategy was a massive and clever advertising campaign. In the early 1900s it was publishing color flyers in the hundreds of thousands, carrying sophisticated marketing themes.[5] In one such flyer there is a picture of the living room of a middle class family that has acquired the new magic machine, which occupies the center stage. The man is proudly displaying his latest acquisition while his delighted wife stands across from him. His son and daughter are sitting and listening attentively, as is the grandfather, a friend, and the servant. This is the new model household, bridging the gap between the ancient and the modern and moving toward a bright and happy future. The gadget designed to bring to you the *kothā* is suddenly so marvelous and cool. It is the new status symbol.

In another flyer there is the picture of Sarasvati, the Hindu goddess of arts and learning, sitting on a lotus in the middle of a lake while the gramophone is perched next to her on another lotus. Fish, crocodiles, frogs, tortoise, serpents, and a beautiful swan all are listening attentively. The British did not believe in Indian goddesses but they did believe in making money. If it could be done by appealing to the goddesses so be it.

In yet another flyer, we see the court of Jehangir (d. 1036/1627) and the text in bold letters, "The gramophone in the court of Jehangir the Magnificent." Of course what is really magnificent here is the gramophone, which stands all by itself on one side while all the attendants are on the other. It was probably the first time in the history of product endorsements that an endorsement from a dead person was employed for a product that was invented centuries after his death. This was also the closest they could get in claiming a Muslim endorsement.

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[5] Ibid., 69–74.

The logo itself reflected shrewd marketing prowess, employing as it did, the picture of a dog listening to a gramophone with the caption "His Master's Voice" (HMV). Interestingly, the gramophone was not a recording machine. There was no chance the dog could listen to his master's voice over it. The picture made no sense. But marketing succeeds because it entertains and titillates, not because it stimulates thinking. The HMV icon was a huge marketing success.

As was the marketing of Gauhar Jān. She became a legend. Throughout India her voice and name were instantly recognized. Her reign lasted for thirty years until her death in 1930. People, who in a previous era would have been ashamed if found listening to her, now felt no such embarrassment. They had been desensitized. They still would be appalled at the thought of going to the *kothā* but had no problem bringing the *kothā* to their home. It came in a neat package, made acceptable by the wonder of technology and the power of a sophisticated marketing campaign. Few remembered to ask whether it was ḥalāl or ḥarām.

A barrier had been broken. It was one of the earliest social engineering projects on a massive scale. And it had succeeded.

Radio: The Reign of Umm Kulthūm

EGYPT AFTER NAPOLEON

Napoleon conquered Egypt in 1798. Although he left in 1801, European domination had begun. Muḥammad Ali Pasha, who ruled from 1805 until 1848, was bent upon the Europeanization of Egypt. Under Khedive Ismail, who ruled from 1863 until 1879, this project greatly accelerated. He opened the Cairo Opera House in 1869 to coincide with the opening of the Suez Canal. If the second act was aimed at gaining economic independence, the first showed why that would not be possible. One has to be free mentally before he or she can be free physically or economically. But Khedive Ismail was the person who declared: "My country is no longer in Africa; it is in Europe."

While that was just a wish that indicated the level of his mental slavery, its opposite was certainly true. Europe was in Egypt. Just three years after his departure, Britain formally took control of the country. For the next twenty-four years (1883 to 1907) Lord Cromer, who had the previous experience of running the Empire in India, ran Egypt like an emperor. It was during the reign of this imperialist "builder of modern Egypt" and through British intervention that Shaykh Muḥammad ʿAbduhū (d. 1323/1905), a major architect of a modernist Islām, became the Grand Mufti of Egypt.

European music business hit Egypt with the full force of the Empire during these vulnerable times. It was further helped by a sizable move of Europeans to Egypt. It is an indication of their massive presence and influence that in 1875 there were nine thousand students in missionary schools in Egypt. In contrast there were eleven thousand in al-Azhar. By 1882, when British occupation began, there were ninety thousand Europeans living in Egypt. No wonder the business of mail order music from Europe had started around the 1870s. Building on that foundation the Gramophone Company produced records of Salamah Ḥijāzī (d. 1917) and others around the same time it did in India. But it was the next phase of the technological invasion, that of radio, that produced the all-time legend there.

RADIO: A EUROPEAN INSTITUTION

Radio broadcast started in the 1920s. It came to the Muslim world in the 1930s and was promoted heavily by the colonial masters. For example, in 1936 radio licenses in India were being issued at a rate of fifteen hundred a month.[6] The British government set up loudspeakers in public places to broadcast radio in villages.

The pace was much faster in Egypt, where the first radio program was aired on 31 May 1934. By 1956 there were 405,000 radio receivers in Egypt. In the next four years the number jumped to over a million sets.[7] The total broadcast time also quadrupled from twelve hours per day in 1956 to forty-eight and a half hours by 1960. Needless to say, most of this time was filled with music and entertainment.

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[6] Woodsmall, *Muslim Women Enter a New World*, 29.

[7] Abu-Lughod, "The Mass Media and Egyptian Village Life," 97.

Just like the gramophone before it, radio was not merely a European invention—it was a European institution. The owners of recording companies and directors of radio stations were Europeans while their subordinates were Egyptian. The decision making was firmly in the hands of the Europeans.[8]

BIRTH OF A LEGEND: FIVE HOUR CONCERTS

The legend that this new medium produced was Umm Kulthūm (1904–1975) who would reign for nearly half a century as nobody had ever done before. She was on the radio from its first day in 1934. Then in 1937 began the Umm Kulthūm night. On the first Thursday of every month, for eight months per year, her concert would be broadcast live to the entire Arab world—from Casablanca in the West to Baghdād in the East and everywhere in between. It continued for thirty-six years until her illness in 1973. During these concerts, which lasted about five hours, life in the Arab world came to a crawl. From the poor Bedouin to the millionaire businessman, everyone listened to her. Or so it seemed. There are stories that President Nasser once postponed a speech to avoid conflict with one of her concerts. A military general postponed a military exercise. When she died her funeral was bigger than that of Nasser, with a reported four million people attending. In 1962 *Life* magazine declared, "She must be ranked among the world's most popular entertainers."[9] This was an understatement, for who else could attract millions of people for five-hour concerts month after month, year after year?

This phenomenal success came as a result of a curious mix of popular Islām, technology, and political sponsorship. Unlike Gauhar Jān of India, Umm Kulthūm came from a poor but religious peasant family. She was born in a small village in the Delta area of Egypt where her father used to recite the Qur'ān and nashīds at private gatherings to supplement his income. She started her career at the same gatherings wearing men's robes and scarves and singing religious songs with no instruments. Soon her father took her to Cairo seeking a bigger market. At her first performance there, at one ʿAbd al-Rāziq Pasha's residence, she covered her face.

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[8] Danielson, "New Nightingales of the Nile," 302.

[9] Gaskill Gordon, "Mighty Voice of Um Kalthum," *Life*, June 1962, 15.

But she was determined to achieve commercial success and take the road that led to it. And that road passed through territory that it has always passed through. Early in her career, in one concert drunkenness among audience members was so visible that her father had to persuade a reluctant manager not to serve alcohol while she was singing. At that time she was fourteen.[10] Five years later, we find her singing,

> Frivolity and coquetry are my creed,
> By God, I have always loved them.[11]

How can one reconcile that with a conservative background and upbringing? The only explanation lies in a single-minded devotion to making it big in music and the requirements of the business of music.

Working toward that goal, she nurtured relations with the ruling class. She was so close to King Farouk (d. 1965) that when he was overthrown, some in the revolutionary council suggested that Umm Kulthūm should also be overthrown, that is banned from singing on government radio. "Only hashish-eaters listen to her," said an organ of the new government.

But, being a person with good political instincts, she was close to the new revolutionary leader Gamal Abdul Nasser as well, who promptly came to her defense. Her reign continued unobstructed. In fact it only grew. She was useful for the propaganda purposes of the new regime. Between 1952 and 1960 nearly half of her songs were in celebration of the new regime. As Nasser discovered socialism, so did she. She sang, "The socialists, you are their leader" as a supposedly religious song praising the Prophet ﷺ.[12] Such blasphemy could be made acceptable through the magic of her music.

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[10] Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt*, 29.

[11] Ibid., 54.

[12] Ibid., 114.

Despite her socialism, the US government had no problem offering free medical treatment for her thyroid at a US Naval hospital in 1953. As usual, the Life reporter was only half candid in reporting that the US ambassador to Egypt "knew what the propaganda value would be" of this act.[13] It is difficult to imagine that a US ambassador would have been as excited about the propaganda value of treating, say, a well-known *qārī*.

Under Nasser—who knew the value of propaganda—the number of radio stations, power of transmission, and hours of broadcast dramatically increased. In 1960 he started an all-music radio station. It was the same year that transistors hit the scene with a bang, reducing the size of the receiver and making it portable, as it now could be run on batteries. Umm Kulthūm, who was riding on this technological wave, beamed, "We are in the transistor age. Thus broadcasting has become the weightiest of the arts. No one can stop it, no one can stand in its way."[14]

And no one could stand in her way either. Nasser used her and the media as a useful distraction to prolong his rule. The entire media machinery was employed in this task. While radio carried her music, print media was devoted to stories about her wardrobe, wealth, and associations with ruling elites.

THE END

Such devotion to music and entertainment had to have its consequences. In 1967 when Israel attacked, it found what it would have expected from an army whose generals would postpone military exercises for music.

The shameful defeat did cause some soul searching. The country had been busy having fun, while ignoring its myriad of problems and the designs of its enemies. Umm Kulthūm, to many Egyptians, symbolized lack of concern with the real problems of society and

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[13] Gaskill Gordon, "Mighty Voice of Um Kalthum," *Life*, June 1962, 17.

[14] Umm Kulthūm, quoted in Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt*, 183.

"avoidance of real economic, social, and political distress."[15] They realized that she was one of the reasons for the June defeat "because her voice numbs the people instead of arousing them."[16]

Unfortunately it was not a realization on a large enough scale. She responded to this criticism by staging patriotic concerts: huge, unprecedented international concerts from France to Pakistan to raise $2.53 million for the Egyptian treasury. Through these, she became the "voice of Egypt." It was an Egypt that had not learnt from its mistakes and was unwilling to repent.

Quite understandably Israel was not the least concerned about her "war efforts" through these concerts. One of her best known songs, *Enta Omri*, was chosen for a 2005 collaborative project involving Israeli and Egyptian musicians.

Her rise reflects the power of the media in a degenerate Muslim society. She catered to popular Islām; was helped by her political alliances, especially that with Nasser; and benefited from radio, the first machine that could instantly take one's voice to millions of people in far away places.

Umm Kulthūm's reign transformed Egypt. It is a measure of the extent of penetration of music in Egypt that in 1373/1954, an Islāmist magazine reportedly published a fatwa by Shaykh Muḥammad Abū Zahrah to the effect that music was a matter of personal choice. It was fine if you listened to it and fine if you did not. Two of his famous disciples Shaykh Muḥammad Ghazālī and Shaykh Yusuf Qaradawi chose the first option. They openly declared that they listened to Umm Kulthūm. Another article in the same magazine extolled the virtues of symphony orchestra and expressed desires for developing Islāmic music on the same lines.[17]

Her reign also transformed her. As Woodsmall notes, "For Moslem (sic) women to take up these lines of entertainment represents a definite breaking of Islāmic traditions . . . No respectable Moslem woman of good family in the past would have dreamed of being a professional entertainer." [18]

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[15] Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt*, 185.

[16] *Umm Kulthūm: Qithārat al-ʿArab* [Umm Kulthūm: Lyre of the Arabs], (Beirut: Maktabat al-Jamāhir, 1975), 134, quoted in Danielson, *The Voice of Egypt*, 185.

[17] Al-Albānī, *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab*, 5.

Umm Kulthūm came from a good family. She began as a *munshidah* or *shaykhah*, singing religious songs (mostly stories of the Prophet ﷺ), with no musical instruments, wearing a veil, and escorted by her father and other male family members on the stage. She was transformed into a *muṭribah ʿalā takht,* (an enchanting songstress with a *takht,* an ensemble including *ʿūd, qānūn*, violin, *riqq*, and *nāy*) singing amorous *qaṣāʾid* with a full instrumental accompaniment while getting rid of her male family member escorts. In her transformation there is much that we can learn about the nature and power of music.

Film: The Melody Queen of the Islāmic Republic

Another medium, same story.

Silent films started around 1900, talking films, or talkies, in 1929. There probably is some unwritten law that the speed of propagation of a new technology is inversely proportional to its usefulness. As with the gramophone before them, it did not take long for the films to reach distant parts of the world. In India the talkies industry started in 1932, barely three years after it started in Hollywood.

The saying that necessity is the mother of invention sounds great and may have been true in a previous era, but in the world of manufactured demands it often is a useful myth that assures us that whatever has been invented was necessary. A case in point is film. Film technology was invented and imported first, and the question of what to use it for was entertained afterwards. Obviously prior to 1900 nobody had been anxiously waiting for silent films to be invented so they could watch overacting comedians like Charlie Chaplin. (The overacting was dictated by the medium. To maintain "audience" interest when there was no audio, the actors had to exaggerate their actions.) But once invented, they were received because of their novelty. That helped spread Hollywood to the four corners of the world. Their spread increased with the coming of the talkies. We can get an idea of the pace by noting that in 1931 there were six cinema houses in Lahore; the number jumped to twenty by 1936. In Turkey, only Istanbul and Izmir had cinema houses in 1923, but by 1933 seventy-nine towns there had cinema. As another indicator of the spread of Hollywood, in that year 120,000 post cards of foreign movie stars were sold.[19]

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[18] Woodsmall, *Muslim Women Enter a New World,* 250.

Silent films had live music, performed on stage, as an essential component. Talkies continued that trend. So while theoretically film was a means of telling a story, in many cases it was chiefly a combination of dance and music. There was another reason for this: It was only singers and dancers, mainly from the *kothā*, that were available as the talent pool for the emerging enterprise. Madam Noor Jehan (1926–2000), who became the celebrated melody queen of the Islāmic Republic of Pakistan, came to the center stage through film. For half a century she dominated that stage.

Noor Jehan was born in a family of town singers, or *mīrāthīs*. That was before the media revolution that conferred respectability on this profession. She traveled to Calcutta (the home of Gauhar Jān), and then to Bombay to find work in the emerging film industry. Her songs created a sensation among the rowdy moviegoers. Two years after the creation of Pakistan, she moved there to continue her business in the Islāmic Republic. Film was a vehicle for carrying her music. That it catered to the most vulgar of tastes did not matter. Success was measured at the box office. And she was successful. As one producer reportedly said, audiences did not even bother to find out the names of the actors; it was enough that Noor Jehan's songs were there.[20]

"JIHAD" WITH MUSIC

The gramophone, film, radio, and the countless print media devoted to extolling the virtues of music and dance created an environment in which music became commonplace, and musicians acceptable. The melody queen flourished in that environment. Then came the

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[19] Ibid., 27.

[20] Rahman Nasreen, "The Melody Queen," *British Film Institute*, http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/imagineasia/guide/noorjehan/melody.html.

1965 war between India and Pakistan and the great moment for her. With the start of the war she sang "patriotic" songs, urging the mujāhids of the Pakistan army to take on their enemy. "O the beautiful soldiers of my country, my songs are devoted to you." The songs were broadcast endlessly on Pakistan radio, every day of the war. The official slogan of the army was: *imān*, *taqwā*, and *jihād*. But it was a jihād that was helped by a songstress's urgings.

Perhaps the singing of the war songs was also a "jihad" on her part. If so, that was a "jihad" that the enemy could easily live with. When she visited India in 1982, she was warmly received by the Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi.

On one occasion she said that singing was an act of worship for her. If one can think of a movie house, a disco, and a concert hall as a place of worship, then hers was definitely an act of worship. (It is a minor detail that it was not the worship of Allāh).

The important point about her is not that she sang and became rich and famous. Rather, it is that she became an acceptable icon of the Islāmic Republic. When she died the then president of Pakistan Muḥammad Rafiq Tarar issued a condolence message, expressing "profound grief and sorrow over the demise of Melody Queen Noor Jahan" and assuring that her patriotic songs would long be remembered by the countrymen. The president was known to be a decent, serious, and religious man. Most probably it was a boilerplate statement prepared on a minute's notice by his staff. It was not a reflection of his person; it is difficult to imagine him attending any of her live concerts. But the fact that such a statement had to be issued, and was received without the slightest of perturbations by the country, shows how drastically things had changed during the course of a century.

Television

Commercial television broadcasts started after World War II and came to the Muslim world starting in the 1950s. At this time colonialism had officially folded its tent and much of the Muslim world had been liberated. But in reality, imperial domination continued in another form. Television was an important element in that domination.

In the Muslim world television was started by Western companies, and even where it was a national project, its consultants, guides, models, and inspirations were Western. Television became the most effective tool to consolidate all the gains made by the earlier technologies and accelerate the pace of Westernization, which would later be given the euphemism of globalization. It took the mass acceptability of music to new heights. For the first time, it allowed large-scale Western programs to be broadcast to local audiences. Additionally their own local programs were patterned after these imported prototypes. The multinationals also deeply impacted the broadcast environment through their commercials, with cleverly embedded cultural messages.

The Arabian Peninsula is the heart of Islām. Here is how television started there. In Saudi Arabia television broadcasts were started by the US Air Force in 1955, ostensibly for US expatriates at the Dhahran airbase. These consisted of music and entertainment imported from Hollywood. The second television station there was another American enterprise set up in 1957 by the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco). In Kuwait the first television station, set up in the 1950s, was connected to a local Radio Corporation of America (RCA) agent. In Abu Dhabi television was started in 1969 by the Thompson Company. In Bahrain it was RTV International, an American company, that introduced television in 1973. These Gulf governments took control of their televisions or started their own stations in the 1960s and 70s.[21]

Television programs are categorized as entertainment, news, education, religion, children's programs, and so on. In reality, there is only one theme underlying all these categories: entertainment. As Neil Postman had noted, "Entertainment is the supra ideology of all discourse on television."[22] Whether it is news, science, religion, or education, if it is happening on TV, it must follow the dictates of entertainment. For the same reason, music is an essential presence on television. It is there not only in the programs that are explicitly categorized as music. It is also there to begin and end news, analysis, science, or any other supposedly serious program. The net result of all this has been a super-saturation level exposure to music for entire populations for dominant parts of their waking hours every day of the week.

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[21] Abdellatif, "Arabian Gulf Satellite TV Programs," 39–41.

[22] Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, 87.

Television did not produce the likes of the legends we saw with the previous technologies. But its net effect in popularizing music and other vulgarities has been exponentially greater than that of the earlier technologies.

Perspective on Technology

This very brief survey should also give us some insights into the nature of technology. Despite the clamor in its favor, technology has been the best tool of subversion employed by the colonial masters. The current widespread and unprecedented acceptability of music in the Muslim world has been one of its great achievements. It was not that someone had put forward new convincing arguments and won the debate on music. Rather, it was that they had used the new machines to blare the music with such force that nobody could escape it. Because of the novelty and charm of these machines, opposition to them was non-existent. Consequently, just like the people who work in a tannery and get used to the stink, entire populations got used to the vulgar noise. It was the triumph of the machine over reason. And it continues to color our reasoning.

Here is Abu-Lughod's description of how radio changed the ideas, thought processes, and preoccupations of a Bedouin girl in some remote Egyptian village.

> All day long, as she goes about her household chores or sits idly, she listens to the radio. She knows all the Egyptian singers, she follows all the radio dramas—about movie stars whose husbands have left them, about young women who have escaped arranged marriages to wealthy old men to elope with young ones . . .[23]

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[23] Abu-Lughod, "Bedouins, Cassettes and Technologies," 11.

No missionary knocked at her door and convinced her that that was how she should be spending her day. The machine did that in an insidious way—unopposed and unchecked. With everybody singing the praises of technology and the constant mantra of "we are left behind because we are behind in technology," nobody dared pay attention to what this technology was doing to her.

SANCTIFYING PROFANITY

We can get some sense of the upheaval in our outlooks and attitudes caused by the new media by considering the format of the radio and television programs in Muslim countries. They start with Qur'ānic recitation but within a couple of minutes transition to music and entertainment, which dominate for the rest of the day. What is the purpose of that recitation? Only to provide a sense of legitimacy to the day's schedule. Contrast this with the stand of the ʿulamā' in better times, when they cautioned against even writing Bismillāh at the beginning of a poetry collection for the possibility that the poetry might contain questionable content.[24] It was technology that made the opening of a day of vulgarities with Qur'ānic recitation acceptable.

This is not to dismiss all technology. The purpose of calling attention to the problems caused by uncritical acceptance of technology is not to advocate its uncritical rejection. We must avoid both extremes and evaluate each technology carefully and decide whether it should be adopted and if so, in what way. What are the possible consequences of its adoption and how best can we mitigate the adverse consequences while taking advantage of its favorable ones. What is more, we should be developing technology to meet our needs as defined and articulated by us.

We can get a hint from recent history. We have referred to the efforts of Egypt's Muḥammad Ali Pasha for the Europeanization of Egypt. Despite that, when he tried to establish Egypt's industrial base including a textile industry, European powers ganged up on him to thwart the effort—their sermons about the need for the rest of the world to advance in science and technology notwithstanding. There was a clear message: There is technology you can have and technology you cannot touch. Genuine defense capabilities are not allowed. Genuine industrial capability that will make you independent and contribute to real economic power is not allowed. The latest musical instruments and color televisions? No problem.

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[24] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, sixth point in the discussion of Bismillāh in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:150.

VOID IN TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

Related to this is the subject of technology education. In engineering colleges across the Muslim world, one important subject has been mysteriously left out: The study of the relationship between technology and society and the related history of technology. How does technology impact a society? What are the cultural, economical, and political biases built into a given technology? Where does a particular new technology fit in a Muslim society? How is a given technology, say the mobile phone, affecting our social values and the fabric of society? Why has it become a prime and uncontested vehicle for carrying music to the most sacred places? What can be done about it? It is tragic that the engineers and technologists of the Muslim world have not the least idea about the societal impacts of the technologies they may be importing, serving, or building. Our attitude has been, if it has been invented, we need it, in the shape and form it was developed in some other land. This uncritical attitude has been reinforced by an either-or proposition one often hears. How can you oppose "A" when you are using "B," so the rhetorical question goes. For "A" you can substitute any technological application that faces hard questions, while "B" is any acceptable technological product. The proposition is that one must either accept all technology (except, of course, the one that the custodians of technology declare to be off limits) or reject all of it. As a result of this lamentable mind-set the all-important filters have been completely missing from the process of technology adoption and use—with devastating consequences. The case of the media is just one example of this disaster.

Interestingly, sometimes our 'ulamā' are accused of not moving fast enough to embrace new technology. Those who have no understanding of technology and its history are the most vocal in such accusations. Upon reflection we may realize that the bigger problem has been our rush to embrace new technology without any scrutiny or thinking.

But this was a digression. Let us now return to the issue of music, the media and the imperial project.

Mass Culture for the Mass Market

In the postcolonial world, the media project remains extremely important for two strategic goals. The first is dear to the accountants for the global capital; the second to its ideological warlords. For both of these groups music is an indispensable tool.

The search for new markets that started the colonial project three centuries ago has now reached its ultimate stage: the search for a homogenized global marketplace. The goal is to produce customers everywhere on the globe who adopt similar tastes, values, and lifestyles so they can be served by the same few global corporations.[25] With this global monoculture, everyone can have it his way, which also matches the global corporate way. "The idea is for our minds and values to match the commercial corporate systems around us, like so many compatible computers."[26]

The result has been what Adorno and Horkheimer called "culture industry."[27] It is in the nature of this scheme that it must force the customers around the globe to comply with its ideas of an ideal customer. Its message is, do not think, just consume. Obey your thirst. And let the culture industry manufacture that limitless thirst that is so necessary for ensuring limitless markets for the sponsors. The media machine has the strategic goal of "reducing people to membership of a conforming, consuming mass and eroding their capacity for genuine thought or feeling,"[28] while constantly invoking the myth of a community of free individuals.

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[25] Cavanagh and Mander, eds., *Economic Globalization*, 38.

[26] Ibid., 230.

[27] See Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception."

[28] Martin, "Adorno: Music as Representation," 92.

Music is a key element in this game. The Pied Piper may be a myth, but the power of the jingles is a reality. Jingles sell. They get stuck in your head. They do not get there through intellectual arguments, so you cannot get them out through counter arguments. They put you in the mood to buy without need or rational thinking. The worldwide marketing success of Coca Cola and McDonalds was not the result of some great health benefits that their products embodied. On the contrary they succeeded despite serious nutritional concerns with them. Their success is the result of their marketing campaigns, which have music as an integral part. One small episode may help us grasp it better. When Coca-Cola's sales started to go down in 2004, what was its solution? It was to add another $400 million to its worldwide advertising budget increasing it to $2.5 billion. In Australia it also planned "Live 05," a music campaign. Marketing director John Wardley explained: "This year we have the concerts, and more of them, we have the advertising, we have the promotion, but we also have what we call the network, which is an online music community."[29]

Music makes the cows give more milk and the consumers to buy more Coca-Cola. It is an animal instinct, and the spreading of consumer culture—the main goal of globalization—thrives on animal instincts.

But more than commercial corporate interest is involved here. Music numbs the mind and distracts the people from thinking critically about their situation and about the important and serious things in life. In the age of the mass media, music is a weapon of mass distraction, essential to winning the hearts and minds in the tradition of Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith.

"Winning the Hearts and Minds"

Normally music is all about fun. Sing. Dance. Have a good time. Those who promote it come with a smiling face. They just want you to be entertained and happy. But what if you do not want it? It is only when you refuse that you may see their frowns and learn how serious their mission is. Two countries tried it in recent times.

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[29] John Wardley, quoted in Alarcon, "The Reinvention of Coke."

One was Irān under Khomeini; the other was Afghānistān under the Tālibān. It is quite illuminating to see how the media reacted.

Khomeini understood the corrosive power of music. He said:

> Music is like a drug; whoever acquires the habit can no longer devote himself to important activities. It changes people to the point of yielding to vice or to preoccupations pertaining to the world of music alone. We must eliminate music because it means betraying our country and our youth. We must completely eliminate it.[30]

This was unforgivable. *Time* issued a scathing charge sheet against Khomeini in its December 1979 issue, which declared him as the man of the year, citing his banning of alcohol and free mixing of men and women in public places. It then continued:

> Khomeini even banned most music from radio and TV. Marches were acceptable, he told Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci, but other Western music "dulls the mind, because it involves pleasure and ecstasy, similar to drugs." Fallaci: "Even the music of Bach, Beethoven, Verdi?" Khomeini: "I do not know those names." [31]

The chutzpah of the last part is unmistakable. The whole world is supposed to know the names of Western musicians and consider them heroes. Using a report from Oriana Fallaci was also quite appropriate for the occasion. The racist author, who said "Muslims multiplied like rats," had devoted her life to a crusade against Islām and Muslims.

This attitude goes to the highest academic levels. Listing the crimes of Khomeini, Britannica repeats the charges filed by *Time*: "Iranian women were required to wear the veil, Western music and alcohol were banned, and the punishments prescribed by Islāmic law were reinstated."[32] Serious offences.

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[30] Khomeini, quoted in Youssefzadeh, "The Situation of Music in Iran," 38.

[31] "The Mystic Who Lit the Fires of Hatred," *Time*, January 7, 1980, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,923854-1,00.html.

[32] *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Khomeini, Ruhollah," http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9045329 (accessed October 17, 2007).

Due to multiple internal and external factors, Khomeini's initiative did not last long. But when another effort was made, even on a much smaller level, it again met with fierce media attacks. Irān again banned indecent and Western music in December 2005, immediately eliciting angry news and commentary. "Hard-line President Mahmoud Aḥmadinejad has banned all Western music from Iran's state radio and TV stations—an eerie reminder of the 1979 Islāmic revolution," screamed a report in USA Today. It made you think that banning Western music was the equivalent of taking Western hostages or some other despicable crime against humanity. It continued to paint a picture of dread, "The prohibitions mirror those imposed in neighboring Afghanistan during the Tālibān regime, which imposed a strict version of Islāmic law, including a ban on music and film." It then brought relief to the bewildered reader by reminding that the Tālibān were ousted by a U.S.-led coalition in late 2001.[33] The murder and mayhem caused by that invasion thus appeared to be an appropriate punishment for the crime of banning music.

On the other hand, when Yusuf Islam went back to music after twenty-eight years, he was featured as a hero. The "homecoming" reception is evident in the report in USA Today, in which he was presented as a humanitarian whose latest album "*Cup* embodies '60s values of peace, love and understanding." It even assured us, "*Cup*'s concepts of faith and hope grew from Islamic teachings."[34] No doubt, music is an essential component in the "approved" Islām and promotion of music is an important strategic goal.

While looking at the Imperial project one group bears special examination: ethnomusicologists or the subgroup of Orientalists with a special interest in the music in the Muslim world. We do that in the next chapter.

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[33] "Iran's president bans all Western music," *USA Today*, December 19, 2005, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2005-12-19-music-ban_x.htm (accessed November 1, 2007).

[34] Edna Gundersen, "'Cat Stevens' returns to music," *USA Today*, December 14, 2006, http://www.usatoday.com/life/music/news/2006-12-14-yusuf-Islam_x.htm (accessed November 1, 2007).

CHAPTER 4

THE ORIENTALISTS

THE ORIENTALISTS, OR THE WESTERN EXPERTS ON the Orient, which includes the Muslim world, were a creation of the Empire. Although apparently they were objective scholars interested in learning about the lives and histories of distant people, their usefulness for the empire lay in their ability to offer advice on how best to manipulate and control those inferior subjects. They have played a tremendous role in determining the attitudes and perceptions of both Western governments and its peoples about Islām and the Muslim world. A subgroup of these Orientalists is what is known as ethnomusicologists; the Orientalists that specialize in the music of their subjects. Like other colonial institutions this has been least discussed within the Muslim world.

While Orientalism was dealt a serious blow with the publication of Edward Said's book by that name in 1978, the ethnomusicologists escaped unharmed because they were not on the radar screens of anyone. They have influenced music and music debate in the Muslim world in three ways. First, through their nexus with the colonial powers. Second, by influencing the Muslims living in the West. Third, by the transplantation of this influence to the Muslim societies through the medium of Westernized Muslims in those societies. They have created a history of the Muslim world which is supersaturated with the love of music while presenting the discussion on music within the Muslim world as a confusing mess and as an interminable controversy. Anyone who reads their works and is not familiar with the history of music and the actual debate on it in the Muslim world is likely to come back doubting Islamic rulings on the subject. An examination of their works is therefore essential if we want to understand the multi-faceted issue of music today in all its dimensions.

In this chapter we will focus mostly on Henry George Farmer (1882–1965). Born in Ireland and employed at the Royal Artillery Orchestra of London as a musician, he had been trained at the University of Glasgow as an Orientalist. He was the leading light of the Orientalists' crusades for promoting music in the Muslim world. Farmer penned many books on the subject of music in the Arab and Islāmic world. But he was not just a disinterested scholar. At the first Congress of Arab Music held in Cairo in 1932 he was the President of the Commission of Manuscripts and History. Cairo was the trendsetter for the Arab world, while this Congress was an official body with access to governmental resources.

Farmer himself is our first clue to the fanciful trade of the ethnomusicologists and their zeal to inflate the number of Arabic texts favorable to music. In his article titled "'Ghosts'" he mentions the "scissors and paste genus" of these experts who copied fiction from each other, giving it the appearance of fact. They were just creating ghosts. He mentions the article by Jules Rouanet on *La musique arabe* in Albert Lavignac's *Encyclopedie de la musique* (1922) whose lengthy list of Arabic authors on music and libraries where they could be found is "quite worthless." Rouanet took it from Collangettes or Fetis, who depended on Kiesewetter, who trusted in Casiri. But he did not just copy; he added his own creativity to "the ghost making." Through such creativity marvelous transformations were achieved. Ibn Rushd's book on physics, *Sharḥ al-Samāʿ al-Ṭabīʿī* (Commentary on Natural Sound) was turned into a book on music. Ibn Ḥarb's (d. 1340 AC) *Al-Mukhtaṣar fi Laḥn al-ʿĀmmah* (Epitome Concerning Errors of the Masses in Speech) was turned into a book on melodies. Even a book on the steelyard was presented as a book on music. *Kitāb fī Maʿrifat al-Ḥiyal al-Handasiyyāh*, a book about hydraulic machines, by Abū 'l-ʿIzz Ismāʿīl ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī (d. 602/1205) (better known as Badīʿ al-Zamān) was listed in Albert De Lasalle's *La musique des Persan* as a Persian book on music.[1]

If Farmer's concern for accuracy was impressive, his generous acknowledgement of the "great contribution" of Arabian music toward the development of European music may have been overwhelming. Europe learned from the "Saracens" during the crusades, while Turkish Janissaries were an inspiration for its military bands.[2] Also, the names of some musical instruments in English had their origins in Arabic.

Not surprisingly this proved to be a very effective disarming technique for dealing with the inferiority-complex-ridden Muslims. After winning their hearts with this, he could advance any theories, even ridicule and slander Islām and its noble personalities including the Prophet ﷺ himself to his heart's content; he would still be welcome in Cairo and elsewhere. How else can we explain the recent re-publication of his *A History of Arabian Music to the 13th Century* (1929), which contains all this and more, by a Muslim publisher dedicated to publishing Islāmic works?[3]

Farmer's History of Arabian Music

The first thing that strikes us in Farmer's book is his ignorance of even elementary matters about Islām. He begins by informing us that Jāhiliyyah "properly refers to the period from the 'creation of the world' to the birth of Muḥammad."[4] As any elementary student of Islām knows Jāhiliyyah refers to the dark ages in human history, which were constantly interrupted by the coming of not one or two but 124,000 prophets. The first man, Ādam عليه السلام, was also the first prophet, so humanity started its march on earth in full light, not in the darkness of Jāhiliyyah. In the Islāmic discourse Jāhiliyyah refers to the pre-Islāmic period, which is the period starting after the followers of Prophet Ismāʿīl عليه السلام went astray with the passage of time, until the coming of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. When he calls the entire human history before the coming of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ as the period of Jāhiliyyah, Farmer is disconnecting Islām from all of its history.

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[1] Farmer, "'Ghosts'," 125–26.

[2] Farmer, *Military Music*, 12 and 71.

[3] The book was published in 2001 in India by Goodword, an enterprise of Maulana Waheeduddin Khan.

[4] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 1.

There are other gems like that throughout his book. For example we are told that Ḥanbalīs do not permit the *adhān*.[5] (This means we should not hear *adhān* in the Arabian Peninsula where mostly the Ḥanbalī school is followed). And that Sayyidunā Bilāl رضي الله عنه is now considered the patron saint of all callers to prayer.[6] While Islām does not offer any concept of such patron saints, Farmer does startle us with the introduction of a patron saint of singers as well. He brings this and some other sensational discoveries to us from Turkish traveler Evliyā Chelebī (d. 1680), whom he introduces as a "modern authority." Chelebī wrote the ten-volume *Seyahetname*, or *Travelogue*, which is known for "mixing fact, fiction, and humor."[7] According to Caroline Finkel, Chelebī "has a reputation for inaccuracy and exaggeration which derives primarily from the perpetuation of the gross number of errors" in his book.[8] According to Talat Halman his book contains "an immensely rich source of precise information as well as hearsay and flights of imagination."[9]

On the authority of this Chelebī, Farmer mentions a Bābā Sawandīk from India as a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ. While there is no such Companion mentioned anywhere in Islāmic history, there *is* a character named Ratan al-Hindī or Khawājah Raṭan ibn Sāhūk ibn Jakandrīq al-Hindī who matches the account. This man appeared in the sixth century of *hijrah* and claimed to be a Companion. "He was a fraud, no doubt!" writes Ibn Ḥajar.[10] The man claimed that the Messenger ﷺ prayed for blessing in his age six times and each prayer added a century to his age. Farmer has no problem accepting this person as a Companion. Quoting the same Chelebī, Farmer has also introduced two new Companions to the Muslim world, ʿAmr ʿIyār and Ḥamzah ibn Yatīm, both of whom played music at the wedding of Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها. Further the later is buried in Ṭāif and is a patron saint of all singers! Too bad not even the people in Ṭāif know about him.

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[5] Ibid., 34.

[6] Ibid., 37.

[7] Goucher, LeGuin, and Walton, "Traditions and their Transformations."

[8] Caroline Finkel, "Review of *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Aḥmad Pasha (1588-1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels*, by Robert Dankoff." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 56, no. 3, (1993): 595.

[9] Talat Sait Halman, "Review of *The Intimate Life of an Ottoman Statesman: Melek Aḥmad Pasha (1588-1662) as Portrayed in Evliya Çelebi's Book of Travels*, by Robert Dankoff." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113, no. 4, (Oct.–Dec., 1993): 626.

UNRELIABLE SOURCES

To bring us such juicy tales, he uses the flimsiest evidence he can lay his hands on. They mostly come from one of two sources. The first is Abū ʾl-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967), the author of *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. If Farmer likes Chelebī, he loves Iṣfahānī. He is so overwhelmed by this book that he constantly refers to it as "the great Kitāb al-Aghānī." In fact most of his accounts, as those of other proponents of music, come from this one book.

Abū ʾl-Faraj was born in Iṣfahān, Iran, although he was a Shīʿah Arab of Umawī descent. He was a poet, writer, genealogist, and chronicler. His book contains accounts of the songs that had been collected by Hārūn al-Rashīd's musicians at his orders. It also contains detailed accounts of the poets and singers and the tunes they used. There are stories about 1700 events from the period that started in pre-Islāmic Jāhiliyyah and ended with his time.

At the time *al-Aghānī* was written, it was a more or less standard procedure that an historic account would be preceded by a chain of narrators. So Abū ʾl-Faraj follows the same style. But this does not mean that everything he has written is authentic. Despite a good-looking chain, the reports and the reporters are very weak. The

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[10] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, s.v. "من اسمه رتن" [Whose name was Ratan], no. 3131, 3:457–64.

Orientalists have been misled—many of them happily—by this appearance and they have considered *al-Aghānī* to be authentic.[11] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī quotes contradictory opinions about him. According to one he was the greatest liar. According to the other, he was most reliable. Ibn al-Jawzī writes:

> A person like him cannot be relied upon. In his books he makes light of drinking wine and all kinds of sins. And sometimes he attributes such actions to himself as well. Whoever looks at *al-Aghānī* will find all kinds of wrong and distasteful things in it.[12]

The things Ibn al-Jawzī is referring to include mockery of the Companions, their Successors, and Islāmic teachings; boasts about all kinds of sins; and obscenities. Not surprisingly his book has elicited sharp responses like the one from Walīd al-Aʿẓamī (d. 1425/2004) titled: *Al-Sayf al-Yamānī fī Naḥr al-Iṣfahānī Ṣāḥib al-Aghānī* (The Yemeni Sword in the Neck of al-Iṣfahānī, the Author of al-Aghānī).

The second source employed by Farmer is Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī ibn Ḥabīb (d. 328/940), generally known as Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī. He was a poet and writer from al-Andalus (Islāmic Spain). His book *al-ʿIqd* or *The Necklace* is considered a masterpiece in Arabic literature. Some later writers referred to it as *al-ʿIqd al-Farīd*, or *the Unique Necklace*. It contains selections of oratory, poetry, words of wisdom, history, medicine, and much more. But its literary value should not confuse us about its authenticity. The praise it receives is because of its style, eloquence, and breadth of coverage, not the historic validity of its accounts, which cannot be verified because he has not given any references. Ibn Khallikān writes that it is a collection of all sorts of things, meaning both true and false accounts.[13] He further notes that Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī's collection of poems contains good poems as well as others in which he is showing love for young boys and women.[14] Ibn Kathīr notes that the author had Shīʿī inclinations, implying that he is not reliable.[15] *Al-ʿIqd* is an interesting reading if one reads it as one would read fiction. But to build an historic or legal argument based on this book is really going beyond the pale.

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[11] Gangohī, *Ẓafar al-Muḥaṣṣilīn*, 378.

[12] Ibn al-Jawzī, quoted in Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*, سنة ستٍ وخمسين وثلاثمائة [Year 356 AH], 15:308.

[13] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafiyāt al-Aʿyān*, "٤٦ - ابن عبد ربه" [Bio. no. 46: Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihī], 1:110. The explanation is from Mawlānā Muḥammad Nāfiʿ as quoted in personal correspondence with Muftī Taqi Usmani dated October 17, 2006.

FICTITIOUS HISTORY

Yet, Farmer's crusade demands even more than what these questionable sources offer. When the need arises he charges ahead with equal confidence—with no evidence at all. Consider his refutation of the Qur'ānic account of the destruction of previous nations like ʿĀd, Thamūd and many others. Farmer claims that contrary to the Qur'ānic account, "the fall of the ancient Arab kingdoms was due . . . to political and economic forces, speeded up by subsequent migrations."[16] According to him the fall of Babylonia and Assyria, and later the decline of Phoenician markets caused problems for the Arab kingdoms that were trading with them. So it was not the windstorms for ʿĀd, or the earthquake for the Thamūd, or other punishments as mentioned by the Qur'ān; it was simply the stock market crash that destroyed them!

His chutzpah is even more remarkable because his dates are fictitious. The ʿĀd people were the fifth generation descendants of Prophet Nūḥ ﵇. They lived from 2200 BC to about 1700 BC.[17] The Assyrians, on the other hand, arose around 1800 BC, reached prominence around 1200 BC and vanished around 600 BC, about eleven centuries *after* the disappearance of the ʿĀd, which supposedly was caused by their collapse.[18]

The story of ʿĀd, told in many places in the Qur'ān, is about arrogance, sin, crime, and punishment. It is not related to the issue of music, but it is very much related to our music historian. Their home was al-Rubʿ al-Khālī, or the Empty Quarter, the world's largest sand sea covering some 660,000 square kilometers. At that time, though, it was more hospitable with water sources giving rise to oases. The ʿĀd were unparalleled in physical strength and skills.[19] They built a great civilization and were experts in building tall, lofty buildings and towers. At the same time they were arrogant, unjust, and oppressive.[20] They professed belief in God but associated partners with Him. They had all the trappings of a superpower, and boldly claimed to be the only superpower in the world.[21] Allāh sent Prophet Hūd عليه السلام to warn them of the dire consequences of continuing in their crooked ways. They ignored his repeated reminders. When the clouds appeared before the severe winds that would continue for seven nights and eight days to wipe them out, they still thought that these clouds were the harbingers of much needed rain.[22] Ultimately, only Prophet Hūd عليه السلام and his followers were saved, while the rest of the nation was destroyed. After them the Thamūd people were given domination over the same area and when they also transgressed, they met the Divine punishment in the form of an earthquake. Later, the city of Iram also vanished without a trace.

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[14] Ibn Khallikān, quoted in Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*, سنة ثمان وعشرين وثلاثمائة [Year 328 AH], 15:120–21.

[15] Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*, سنة ثمان وعشرين وثلاثمائة [Year 328 AH], 15:120–21.

[16] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 1–2.

[17] Nadvi, *Geographic History of the Qur'ān*, 77.

[18] Ibid., 91.

Just as the ʿĀd were in denial, so have been people like Farmer who came later. They called the Qur'ānic account a legend or a myth. Then in the 1990s archaeologists unearthed a fortress in the Empty Quarter that contained eight thirty-foot towers—the telltale sign of the ʿĀd people that the Qur'ān had so emphatically mentioned when there was no apparent clue to its presence.

DIATRIBES AGAINST ISLĀM

It is doubtful if even this discovery would have caused Farmer to retract and rethink. What is amazing about him is the ease with which he rejects, even ridicules, the accounts of the Qur'ān while at the same time eagerly accepting a fable, a tale, a verse from some poet, or just his own conjectures and imaginations. He is as dedicated an enemy of the Qur'ān as the Jāhiliyyah leaders of Quraysh were. He calls sūrahs al-Nās and al-Falaq as "no more than what could be expected from a *kāhin*" and Sūrah al-Lahab as "the typical curse of a soothsayer." Yet he has to grudgingly admit that "In the course of time Muḥammad's teachings bore fruit." A little later he announces, "With the armed forces of al-Madīnah at his back, Muḥammad unsheathed the sword of Islām against the unbelievers."[23] He does not explain why the teachings of, ***naʿūdhu billāh***,[24] an ordinary ***kāhin*** and soothsayer bore fruit. And how the Prophet ﷺ got the support of Madīnah to begin with.

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[19] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Fajr 89:8.

[20] *Al-Qur'ān*, Hūd 11:59.

[21] *Al-Qur'ān*, Fuṣṣilat 41:15. They said, "Who could have a power greater than ours?"

[22] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Aḥqāf 46:24.

Apart from unreliable sources and a biased mind, the next thing one notes is Farmer's diatribes against Islām's holiest personalities. He did not hesitate to call the most respected of the Umawī rulers, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, universally recognized as the fifth righteously guided khalifāh, a bigot. With equal zeal he mocked the probity of Sayyidunā ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and the piety of Sayyidunā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنهما. He attacked the Qur'ān and insulted the Prophet ﷺ. His statements betray a sick mind supersaturated with hatred of Islām. Of necessity they are also brimming with internal contradictions and fabrications. In examining these we get a better understanding of the person who championed the cause of music in Islām and gain insights into the agenda behind this campaign.

He claims that the wedding of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ with Khadījah رضي الله عنها was "celebrated with great festivity, mirth, music, and dancing."[25] Of course, he offers no evidence to support this claim. Neither can he explain why then this pattern was not repeated in the wedding with ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها or any of his other weddings. Or what kept the Prophet ﷺ from proclaiming that as the proper method for celebrating weddings? Farmer is trying to take advantage of the fact that there are not as many reports available for the life of the Prophet ﷺ before his attaining prophethood as there are afterwards. But we do have this clear statement from the Prophet ﷺ that completely destroys Farmer's baseless accusation. It is reported by Sayyidunā ʿAlī ؓ that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say,

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[23] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 21.

[24] ***naʿūdhu billāh***: We seek refuge in Allāh. We reluctantly reproduce this blasphemy, seeking Allāh's protection in doing so.

[25] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 10.

> I never thought of doing the kinds of things the people used to do in the period of Jāhiliyyah except on two occasions; on both occasions Allāh protected me. We used to tend sheep for our people. One night I said to my companion to watch over my sheep as I went to Makkah for the evening to chat with the youth there. He said fine. So I went and reached the first house in Makkah where I heard the sound of duffs and mazāmīr. I asked what it was. They said that so-and-so got married. So I sat down to watch. But Allāh put me to sleep. By Allāh, nothing woke me up but the touch of sun's rays (the next day). I returned to my companion and he asked what I did. I said I did nothing and then I told him what I saw.[26]

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[26] ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib ؓ in *Ṣaḥīḥ ibn Ḥibbān*, كتاب التاريخ ، باب بدء الخلق، ذكر الخبر المُدْحض قول من زعم أن النبي ﷺ كان على دين قومه قبل أن يوحى إليه [Book: History, Chapter: Beginning of Creation, Refutation of the one who claims that the Prophet ﷺ was on the religion of his people before he received Revelation], no. 6272, 14:169–70. Cf. al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, كتاب التوبة والإنابة [Book: Repentance and turning to Allāh], no. 19/7619, 4:273; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Maṭālib al-ʿĀliyah*, كتاب السيرة والمغازي، باب عصمة الله رسوله محمدا ﷺ قبل البعثة [Book: Sīrah and Battles, Chapter: Allāh's protection of Muḥammad ﷺ before Prophethood], no. 4212, 17:208; Ibn al-Athīr, نسب رسول الله ﷺ وذكر بعض أخبار آبائه وأجداده [The lineage of the Prophet ﷺ and some reports about his ancestors] in *al-Kāmil fi 'l-Tārīkh*, 1:568; Al-Dhahabī, السيرة النبوية ومما عصم الله به محمدا ﷺ من أمر الجاهلية [Sīrah: Allāh's protection of Muḥammad ﷺ from the matters of Jāhiliyyah] in *Tārikh al-Islām*, 2:79–80; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*, باب مولد رسول الله ﷺ ، فصل: في منشئه ومرباه عليه الصلاة والسلام [Chapter: Birth of the Prophet ﷺ, Section: His ﷺ upbringing and training], 3:446–47; Al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, باب ما جاء في حفظ الله تعالى رسوله ﷺ في شبيبته [Chapter: Allāh's protection of His Messenger ﷺ in his youth], 2:33–34; Al-Aṣbahānī, *Dalā'il al-Nubuwwah*, الفصل الثالث عشر ، ذكر ما خصه الله عز وجل به من العصمة [Chapter 13, Allah's special protection for him], 185.

The ḥadīth goes on to tell us that this same thing happened on one more occasion and then concludes, "By Allāh after that I never thought of or returned to such a thing until Allāh honored me with prophethood."[27]

As a prophet he was under the protection of Allāh from sins. But even before the prophethood, he was protected as this ḥadīth shows. How preposterous to claim that he arranged in his own wedding that from which Allāh had protected him in other people's weddings.

FABRICATING ḤADĪTH

But Farmer could not care less for Ḥadīth. As he ridicules the Qur'ān, so too does he attempt to destroy Ḥadīth—using two fabricated ones. The first one is: "Whatever good saying has been said, I myself have said it." The other is, "You must compare the sayings attributed to the Qur'ān; what agrees therewith is from me, whether I actually said it or not."[28] As usual no source for these alleged Prophetic statements is provided. Obviously both of these are licenses for fabrication. He does not enlighten us as to why the Prophet ﷺ gave such an open license for fabricating Ḥadīth and why all the Muslim scholars have remained unaware of its existence. Why did they spend their lives sifting authentic reports from fabricated ones when there was a perfectly legal way of fabricating?

While Farmer's reports come from a secret source that only he knows about, Muslims are well aware of a ḥadīth that says exactly the opposite:

مَنْ يَقُلْ عَلَيَّ مَا لَمْ أَقُلْ فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ

> Whoever reports from me what I did not say, let him find his seat in the Fire.[29]

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 32.

[29] Salamah ﵁ in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب العلم ، باب إثم من كذب على النبي ﷺ [Book: Knowledge, Chapter: The sin of the one who lies about the Prophet ﷺ], no. 109.

Its other narrations report:

> مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ
>
> Whoever lies about me intentionally let him find his seat in the Fire.[30]

This ḥadīth has been reported by sixty-two Companions, making it *mutawātir* (widespread), which is the highest standing a report can have. Apparently on Farmer's inverted scales that makes it unnoteworthy. What makes it even more interesting is his assertion that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ wrote the Qur'ān. Farmer does not explain whether such liberties were permitted with the Qur'ān as well ("Whatever good saying has been said you can add that to the Qur'ān."). If not, why?

FICTIONAL THEORIES OF PROHIBITION

Regarding the prohibition of music in Islām, he advances two opposing views. The first is that Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ himself forbade it. The second is that he did not; rather, "it was manufactured by the theologians of the ʿAbbāsid era, who were jealous of the inordinate attention paid to music and musicians."[31]

Regarding the first possibility, he claims that the problem was "physiological"; a defect that geniuses like Farmer would diagnose centuries later, although the Prophet's ﷺ own enemies at the time could not find it. So the tale from Farmer runs as follows: Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was averse to music because of some physiological problems, and this led him to want to prohibit it.[32] However there is no prohibition of music in the Qur'ān. This, despite the fact that the Prophet ﷺ himself wrote it. Moreover, just four pages ago Farmer informed us, "tradition is fairly persistent that Muḥammad tolerated instrumental music."[33] That is despite physiological problems that Farmer spent a half page expounding. Contradiction, after contradiction, after contradiction.

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[30] Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, المقدمة ، باب في التحذير من الكذب على رسول الله ﷺ [Introduction, Chapter: Warning about the one who lies against the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ], no. 4.

[31] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 22.

[32] Ibid., 32.

[33] Ibid., 28.

The other claim, about jealousy of theologians, is equally fantastic. Farmer has himself reported that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik ibn Anas, Imām Shāfiʿī, and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal all opposed music. It is not clear which one of them was fighting for his position at the ʿAbbāsī court. These were the giants whose standing among the people was higher than that of the kings. And even the kings knew that. It is well-known how Hārūn al-Rashīd, the famous ʿAbbāsī khalīfah, requested a private Ḥadīth instruction session from Imām Mālik and was refused. He had to come and sit in the class with everyone else. Farmer does not hesitate in calling these luminaries a greedy bunch, who would fabricate laws to serve their personal agenda.

Even with this fancy tale how can he explain the behavior of the Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn regarding music? He himself admits that "music was banned" under their rule. His response: "In the first half century of Islām, the conditions . . . were scarcely propitious for the arts," because they were engaged in battles.[34] He forgets that he noted that the pagan Arabs used music as a weapon of war in Badr and Uḥud.[35] Its effect in exciting soldiers on the battlefield is undeniable. How could then battles become the excuse for prohibiting it? Additionally if it is said that they did not have time for it, then we should know that they did have all the time for curbing it. As we have noted earlier, Sayyidunā Umar رضي الله عنه used to inquire whenever he heard the sound of duff and punish those involved unless it was a valid occasion like a wedding or circumcision.

It is futile to search for rhyme or reason in Farmer's case for music. But what he lacks in arguments or evidence, he tries to make up for with a fertile imagination and a venomous pen. Of these he has no shortage.

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[34] Ibid., 43.

[35] Ibid., 10, 11.

Shiloah's "Great Musical Tradition"

Farmer's disciple Amnon Shiloah of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is a little more refined; he does not resort to the kind of direct vulgar attacks on the Qur'ān, the Prophet ﷺ, and the noblest Islāmic personalities that we have seen from Farmer. But his goals are the same and beneath the surface his methods are the same too. For example in his article "Music and Religion in Islam," he refers to the "diatribes" of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā against music.[36] As he is well aware *Dhamm al-Malāhī* of Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, the earliest extant book censuring music, contains just a listing of the Prophetic statements on the subject, with only a brief explanation here and there from the author. Thus the epithet "diatribe" (abusive criticism) has been applied to the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ himself. Music is his sacred cow that has been blasphemed by these Prophetic statements of censure, causing this outburst. But he hides his attack on the Prophet ﷺ behind an attack on Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā.

In his book *Music in the World of Islām* he tries to maintain a façade of objectivity, at least in the beginning. He acknowledges, "In general, the advent of Islām represents a turning point in the history of mankind."[37] But then he proceeds to prove the opposite. We have already seen his outrageous claim about poetry in the early Islāmic period.[38] His claim about music is similarly fabulous. He talks about the advent of the "Great Musical Tradition" in the Islāmic world. As he explains, a Great Tradition describes a way of life. So singing and playing and listening to music became the way of life in city after city under Islām. This, despite his admission that the absence of musical documents in Islāmic history "makes it impossible to establish definitively the nature of the music."[39]

Shiloah's purpose is "to remove misunderstandings and promote understanding in the world shrinking into a 'global village.'" He reminds his Western readers that "the concept of music is not the same everywhere."[40] He claims, "We have endeavored to present concepts about music, and conflicting attitudes towards it, as they prevailed in their time."[41] What he actually does toward that end is to search for deviant groups, cults, and singers and dancers of all shades from Constantinople to Kashmir, and paint them in glowing colors. This includes the Mawlawis of Anatolia "in whose ceremony music and dance formed an indivisible unit"; the Isawiyya of Morocco, whose ceremony "reaches its climax with the *mujarrad* (denuding), during which the dancers remove the jallaba and display extreme excitement"; the Berbers who dance "in a circle with men and women alternating"; even the belly dancers in Constantinople who performed lewd acts.[42] This, we are assured, is an honest depiction of the Islāmic way of life.

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[36] Shiloah, *Music and Religion in Islam*, 146.

[37] Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islām*, xv.

[38] See chapter 1.

[39] Shiloah, *Music in the World of Islām*, xiv.

USEFUL "MISUNDERSTANDING"

We can gauge his interest in removing misunderstandings and promoting understanding from the opening of his article "Music and Religion in Islam." He uses a news story in the French paper *Le Monde* that alleged that the Tālibān had asked people to free their captive birds to keep them from listening to their singing. This was of course the kind of fabrication that is permitted in the mainstream media because there is no fear of it being countered and it fits so nicely in the picture of crazy and irrational zealots that they want to paint of the adversary. Shiloah knows very well that nobody in Islām has ever declared listening to birds as impermissible. What the Tālibān had been concerned about was the captivity of the poor birds and not their singing. So he allows that the *Le Monde* story may be a "misunderstanding" (what a euphemism for fabrication!) but then moves on to assert that it nevertheless was an "indication of the vigorous enduring debate over the permissibility of music in Islam."[43] In other words it was a useful "misunderstanding." Why not. It is his purpose to magnify that debate and the story provides a springboard for launching his claim that opinions on music in Islam vary "from complete negation to full admittance of all musical forms and means including the controversial dance."[44] When misunderstandings can be useful, then by the same logic true understanding can be harmful and who can blame him for staying out of harm's way.

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[40] Ibid., xiii.

[41] Ibid., xv.

[42] Ibid., 42, 143, 151, 139.

[43] Shiloah, *Music and Religion in Islam,* 143.

Certain themes recur with amazing regularity in the Orientalist discourse. They start with the axiom that *naʿūdhu billāh*, the Qur'ān is a fabrication, that the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was an impostor, and that Muslim scholars and jurists were dishonest. This is how their "academic" pursuit begins and that is how it ends. Living in this self-contained world they cannot accept the obvious, that the scholars and jurists declared music prohibited because that is what the Sharīʿah sources pointed to. Rather they must believe that it was a personal decision based on subjective reasons. Thus Shiloah asks, what provoked the hostile attitude toward music? (In the same vein one could ask why Islam was hostile to wine or dishonesty). Farmer had opined that it was jealousy of the status of musicians on the part of the jurists. His disciple Shiloah, recognizing problems with that explanation, offers that it was irritation with the extravagant ways of the fun-loving rulers.[45] (And of course in his narrative the jurists went to an extreme in this *reaction*.)

Presenting the process of formulation of Islamic laws as a knee-jerk reaction, Shiloah also enlightens us that opposition to music may have been due to irrational (and superstitional) beliefs in the overwhelming power of music.[46] Needless to say, such conjectures need no evidence since they flow from his basic axioms. Since it is a given for him that Islamic laws are not based on revelation, they must be based on superstition.

His depiction of the Sufis is also interesting. He paints them with a broad brush, informing us that music was doctrinally essential to the performance of the Sufi rituals. The restrictions imposed by Sufi masters, their initial reluctance and eventual abandonment, and their cautions about the dangers of the slippery stone in the interim period do not appear in his account. Neither does the fact that out of the twenty or so Sufi orders only a handful have made samāʿ an integral part of their rites. He seamlessly moves from quoting Aḥmad al-Ghazālī to describing the entertainment shows of the Whirling Dervishes, making his readers believe that what the Dervishes are doing is what Aḥmad al-Ghazālī had taught. Of course, the censure of entertainment and prohibition of malāhī in Aḥmad al-Ghazālī's book cannot make it to his readers.

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[44] Ibid., 144.

[45] Ibid., 145.

[46] Ibid., 149.

Shiloah's article was based on the *Tracts on Listening to Music* of James Robson. (See chapter 8 for a detailed review of this tract). It shows how Orientalist works feed off each other, each author perpetuating the fabrications ("misunderstandings") of his predecessor while adding his own creativity.

THE ORIENTALISTS AND THE PAGAN ARABS

Coming back to Shiloah's book, another theme in it is the presentation of Qur'ānic recitation and *adhān* as musical performances. He goes to the extreme of printing some Qur'ānic verses in musical notation. (This seems to be a popular theme among the new Orientalists. Kristina Nelson spent five years studying *tajwīd* towards the same goal.[47]) It is an extension of the efforts of other "experts" who, in order to prove that the Qur'ān was poetry, measured some verses of the Qur'ān according to poetic meters. The only difference between these Orientalists and the Quraysh leaders of Jāhiliyyah who accused the Prophet ﷺ of being a poet and the Qur'ān to be his poetic composition is that the latter openly declared their enmity to Islām. While going even further and declaring the Qur'ān to be a musical composition, Shiloah and Nelson attempt to maintain a façade of friendliness and this highest act of blasphemy is billed as an attempt to build understanding.

The act may also be an outgrowth of their frustration over Islām's great success in keeping its acts of worship music-free.

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[47] Nelson, *Art of Reciting the Qur'ān.*

Islām versus Christianity on Music

We now turn to the claim made by Farmer: "Islam never really eradicated the pagan ideals of the Arab so far as music is concerned."[48] Farmer is delighted to report that Islām totally failed in its dealing with music. His desire to promote music in the Muslim world can be properly understood in light of this claim. It is true that the prevalence of music in the Muslim world reflects a failure of Muslims. However his claim is much bigger than that and needs to be carefully examined.

To make his case he relies on "the great *Kitāb al-Aghānī*" and *al-'Iqd al-Farīd.* We have already looked at the problems with these resources and with his history. But even if we were to accept everything that *al-Aghānī* and *al-'Iqd* mention, the judgment of failure will still have to wait. To see where Islām failed or succeeded, we need to contrast Islām's record with that of Christianity, because Islām succeeded precisely where Christianity failed.

Even the questionable sources must agree that Islām banished music from its acts of worship and from the masjid. Pagan Arab worship consisted of whistling and clapping in ḥajj ceremonies and other devotions. Islām obliterated it for good. Despite all the controversies and debates about music in the Muslim world, the masjid and all prescribed acts of worship in Islām have remained completely music free.

The potential causes were there. People knew about the power of music and could have entertained the idea of harnessing that power in the service of God. In fact that is what drove other religions to the use of music in worship. And Islām did have its share of misguided Sufis who could advance that argument. Ibn Qayyim reports an interesting incident about some errant Sufis who tried to use music during ḥajj. "I saw them in ʿArafāt. While the people were all occupied in duʿā' and turning to Allāh in total humility and devotion, they were busy in this cursed samāʿ with duffs and flutes."[49] He himself expelled them from Masjid Khīf several times. The masjid is still there, as are all the places involved in the ḥajj, yet there is not even a trace of this practice. Such initiatives failed totally and completely; all the Sufi arguments for samāʿ helping one to remember Allāh and achieve ecstasy could not touch the ṣalāh or ḥajj. There is no controversy regarding the use of music in the masjid, which has remained a music-free zone for more than fourteen centuries.

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[48] Farmer, *Arabian Music*, 31.

[49] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:261.

In contrast, in Christianity the debate begins as soon as one enters the church. As Dickinson points out, "Song has proved such a universal necessity in worship that it may almost be said, no music no Church."[50]

It was not always so. Christianity also had condemned music. The Bible does contain these verses, regarding music and singing:

> Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.[51]
>
> Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.[52]

In fact the term for singing without any instrumental accompaniment is "a cappella." This is an Italian expression meaning "in chapel style." This is so because the historic chapel style was singing with voice only, no instruments. Hence the verdict from John L. Girardeau (d. 1898), whose is a prominent voice of the Puritans: "The conclusion is: Instrumental music, in connection with the public worship of the church, is forbidden."[53]

Announcing that verdict to a Christian crowd today may incite, based on the circumstances, laughter, ridicule, or a walkout. Today the instrument is in and a cappella is out. In fact, church elders and leaders have been busy ordering church versions of the latest pop songs and other secular music to attract the youth, whose culture is centered on music. They are concerned about winning the "worship wars." Because, devout Christians today choose churches based on the music they serve.

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[50] Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, vii.

[51] Amos 5:23. King James Version.

[52] Isaiah 5:11–12. King James Version.

[53] Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, 200.

How did this come about? Through a process of increasing capitulation to the secular pressures. At each stop on the way, there were controversies that divided the church; at each those who tried to hold on to the commands of the Bible lost. The issues of contention have been many. Should there be any singing at all? Syrian Jacobites, Nestorians, Clement of Alexandria and Ambrosius opposed all singing. If singing was to be permitted, what texts should they be singing? Psalms only or other compositions including their own? The Christian Reform Church of the Dutch allowed only psalms, while differences of opinion regarding hymns contributed to many historic schisms among Protestants. Should there be congregational participation or should they sit quietly as a selected group called the choir did the singing along with the priest? Reform movements insisted on participation. Catholics were ambivalent. Should instruments be allowed? Syrian Jacobites and Nestorians opposed instrument use totally. But for most Christians the organ—once a secular instrument—now is a symbol of church music.

THE CHURCH AND THE INSTRUMENT DEBATE

The instrument debate in the church has been especially intense. Historian Dickinson asks whether instruments were used by primitive Christians. His answer: Early church leaders considered it profane to use "the sensuous nerve-exciting effects of instrumental sound in their mystical, spiritual worship."[54] It continued like that until the time of Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1250) who stated that his church did not use musical instruments to avoid appearing to "Judaize."[55] It was sometime after him that the organ was introduced into the church. Girardeau cannot help make this stinging remark:

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[54] Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, 54-55.

[55] Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, 158–59.

> It deserves serious consideration, moreover, that notwithstanding the ever-accelerated drift towards corruption in worship as well as in doctrine and government, the Roman Catholic Church did not adopt this corrupt practice until about the middle of the thirteenth century.[56]

In stark contrast Muslims do not have to lament such corruption in worship. We can be sure that their case would have been no different if Islām had not eradicated the pagan ideals about music as claimed by Farmer.

The use of instrumental music in the church was also a major point of contention with some Protestants in the early stages of their movement. Historian Dickinson mentions "violent controversies over the use of instrumental music in worship in the British and American Protestant churches."[57] Among the strong voices of opposition were those of Zwingli,[58] Calvin,[59] and others. Zwingli called the employment of instrumental music in the church as "wicked pervicacity."[60] Calvin called it profane:

> In Popery there was a ridiculous and unsuitable imitation [of the Jews]. While they adorned their temples, and valued themselves as having made the worship of God more splendid and inviting, they employed organs, and many other such ludicrous things, by which the Word and worship of God are exceedingly profaned, the people being much more attached to those rites than to the understanding of the divine Word.[61]

There were others who held the same view. The Synods of the Reformed Dutch Church pronounced decidedly against the use of instrumental music in public worship soon after the Reformation. The Independent and Presbyterian churches began their development on the American continent without instrumental music. Similarly the French Reformed Church excluded instrumental music from its services. John Wesley (d. 1791), the founder of the Methodist Church, an offshoot of the Church of England, said: "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen."[62] In the next generation we find Adam Clarke (d. 1832) declaring: "I believe that the use of such instruments of music, in the Christian Church, is without the sanction and against the will of God; that they are subversive of the spirit of true devotion, and that they are sinful."[63]

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[56] Ibid., 161.

[57] Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, 54-55.

[58] Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531) was a Swiss theologian who helped create the Reformed Tradition in Protestantism.

[59] John Calvin (1509–1564) was another early leader of the Protestant Reformation.

[60] Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, 163.

[61] Ibid., 165.

On the other hand, Luther declared music to be the "greatest treasure in the world next to the Word of God."[64] It is not surprising that he called for using it in the service of God: "I would like to see all the arts, especially music, used in the service of Him who gave and made them."[65] In the end, the proponents of music won. Dickinson notes a marked change beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, which marks the victory of secular forces over the church. "It was an intrusion into the church of musical methods that were fostered under purely secular auspices."[66]

CHURCH OF ENGLAND: DOCTRINAL CHANGE

In 1808 when the question of the introduction of instrumental music into public worship was placed before the Presbytery of Glasgow, the Church of England entered article 20 granting itself the right to "decree rites and ceremonies."[67] Thus the Church of

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[62] John Wesley, quoted in Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 686.

[63] Clarke, *The Holy Bible*, 686.

[64] Luther, foreword to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae Iucundae*, quoted in Buszin, "Luther on Music," 83. The *Symphoniae Iucundae* was a collection of chorale motets published in 1538.

[65] *Luther's Works*, preface to the *Wittenberg Hymnal* (1524), 53:316. Interestingly we find Luther's arguments repeated today by the proponents of music in the Muslim world.

[66] Dickinson, *Music in the History of the Western Church*, 184.

[67] Girardeau, *Instrumental Music*, 23.

England made a huge doctrinal change to allow musical instruments in the church. Girardeau explains its significance:

> The principle of the discretionary power of the church in regard to things not commanded by Christ in his Word, was the chief fountain from which flowed the gradually increasing tide of corruptions that swept the Latin church into apostasy from the gospel of God's grace.[68]

Today most churches have instrumental music and the few holdouts are having debates about switching to it. Dickinson had said about the prohibition of music by early churches, "No further justification for such prohibitions is needed than the shameless performances common upon the stage in the time of the Roman empire."[69] The shameless performances on the secular stage never stopped. They only increased in intensity. But over time, the church changed its position 180 degrees. It followed the dictum, as it had always done, if you can't fight them, join them.

While the church submitted to the pagan ideals of music, Islām held its ground. The masjid is still the place where one is safe from this profanity; where one goes not for entertainment but for devotion. Despite the huge onslaught of music Islām has protected its methods of worship and its doctrines, whereas Christianity has failed miserably.

How did it come about? Ultimately everything goes back to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth, the twin foundations of all Islāmic teachings and rulings. With all the background information that has been presented so far, it is now time that we turn to the Islāmic source texts directly and see what they teach and command about music and how they have been understood by leading scholars throughout the centuries. It is time to look closely at the much touted music debate and clear the fog surrounding it. We do that in the next part.

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[68] Ibid., 23–24.

[69] Ibid., 55.

Part Two

CLEARING THE FOG

CHAPTER 5

ISLĀMIC SOURCE TEXTS

THE QURʾĀN

ENJOYMENT OF MUSIC DEPENDS UPON OUR wonderful faculty of hearing. The Qur'ān talks a lot about it, mentioning the word *samʿ*, with its derivatives, 179 times in fifty-eight sūrahs. It says that it is a special gift of Allāh for which we should be thankful:

> قُلْ هُوَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْأَبْصَٰرَ وَٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةَ ۖ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾
>
> Say, "He is the One who has originated you, and made for you ears and eyes and hearts. How little do you pay gratitude!" [1]

This faculty can be used properly to our great advantage or improperly to our destruction. Through it we can receive guidance that will assure us eternal success or we may fail to do so thereby ending up in Hell. The disbelievers, interested in blocking the guidance from reaching humanity, spend their energies in keeping people away from the Qur'ān:

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[1] *Al-Qurʾān*, al-Mulk 67:23.

وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا۟ لَا تَسْمَعُوا۟ لِهَٰذَا ٱلْقُرْءَانِ وَٱلْغَوْا۟ فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

> And said those who disbelieved, "Do not listen to this Qur'ān, and make noise during its recitation, so that you may overcome."[2]

While they may be joyous over the success of their schemes here, in the Hereafter they will regret that they failed to listen to the word of Allāh.

وَقَالُوا۟ لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِىٓ أَصْحَٰبِ ٱلسَّعِيرِ ﴿١٠﴾

> And they will say, "Had we been listening or understanding, we would not have been among the people of the Hell."[3]

The believers, on the other hand, listen to the revelation and are moved by it:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا۟ مَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰٓ أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ ٱلدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا۟
مِنَ ٱلْحَقِّ ۖ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ ءَامَنَّا فَٱكْتُبْنَا مَعَ ٱلشَّٰهِدِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

> When they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because of the truth they have recognized. They say, "Our Lord, we have come to believe. So, record us along with those who bear witness."[4]

They had been commanded to listen and follow:

فَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مَا ٱسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَٱسْمَعُوا۟ وَأَطِيعُوا۟

> So, observe taqwā (total obedience to Allāh in awe of Him) as far as you can, and listen and obey.[5]

And they do that:

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[2] *Al-Qur'ān*, Fuṣṣilat 41:26.

[3] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Mulk 67:10.

[4] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Mā'idah 5:83.

[5] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Taghābun 64:16.

> وَقَالُوا۟ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ ٱلْمَصِيرُ ﴿٢٨٥﴾
>
> And they said: "We have listened, and obeyed. Our Lord, (we seek) Your pardon! And to You is the return."[6]

At the same time, the believers are careful not to misuse this ability by listening to useless or vain things:

> وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا۟ ٱللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ
>
> And when they hear absurd talk, they turn away from it.[7]

All this is important because we will be held accountable for the use of all our faculties:

> إِنَّ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْبَصَرَ وَٱلْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔولًا ﴿٣٦﴾
>
> Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart—each one of them shall be questioned about.[8]

It is with the concern for this accountability that a believer turns to the Qur'ān to find guidance about listening to music and singing. In the following, the verses that suggest prohibition are discussed first, followed by the verses that are claimed to indicate permission.

Verses Indicating Prohibition

VERSE 1: CONDEMNATION OF DISTRACTING AMUSEMENTS

> وَمِنَ ٱلنَّاسِ مَن يَشْتَرِى لَهْوَ ٱلْحَدِيثِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ
> وَيَتَّخِذَهَا هُزُوًا ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٦﴾
>
> And of mankind is he who buys discourses of distracting amusements, so that he may, without knowledge (of the

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[6] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Baqarah 2:285.

[7] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Qaṣaṣ 28:55.

[8] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Isrā' 17:36.

> consequences of his action), mislead (people) from the Way of Allāh, and make a mockery of it. For such people there is a disgraceful punishment.[9]

Imām Qurṭubī says that this is one of three verses from which ʿulamā' have deduced the dislike and prohibition of ghinā'. (The other two verses are from Sūrahs al-Isrā', chapter 17, and al-Najm, chapter 53, listed as verse number 3 and 4 below). The key word here is *lahw al-ḥadīth*, translated above as "discourses of distracting amusements." An impressive array of authorities has asserted that it implies ghinā' among other similar things such as idle talks of no benefit.

This interpretation flows from the context of revelation of this verse. According to several commentators[10] the particular person referred to in this verse was Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith, a leader of the Quraysh and a wealthy businessman who was much devoted to the task of stopping the spread of Islām. When the Prophet ﷺ started to publicly call the people to Islām, the Quraysh leaders had resorted to several approaches to counter this "threat," including ridicule, false propaganda, and persecution. Seeing that none of them worked, this one-man think tank gave a talk in which he dissected their campaign strategy. He noted that before prophethood, Muḥammad ﷺ was "the most liked among them, the most truthful in speech, and the greatest in trustworthiness." After he started to invite them to Islām, they tried to dismiss him as a magician, soothsayer, poet, and a crazy person. One by one Naḍr ripped these allegations apart, saying, "No, by Allāh, he is not a magician (soothsayer, poet, and crazy)," ending his talk with a grim warning: "O Quraysh, look very carefully into your affair. By Allāh, a big problem has hit you."[11] In other words he announced that their strategy was not well thought out and was bound to fail. Then he went to Persia and brought back his solution—a "charm offensive." According to some reports he bought storybooks containing stories of Rustum, Bahrām, and others and tried to use them to counter the Qur'ān. According to other reports he purchased *qaynahs* or slave girls who were songstresses and used them to try to win the hearts and minds of anyone who showed interest in Islām. He would assign a qaynah to each such person and ask her to serve him food and wine and to sing to him. This was obviously better than the austere Islāmic lifestyle of prayers and fasts, he assured them.[12]

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[9] *Al-Qur'ān*, Luqmān 31:6.

[10] These include al-Zamakhsharī, al-Māwardī, al-Baghawī, al-Qurṭubī, and Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām.

[11] Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyyah*, النضر بن الحارث ينصح قريشا [Al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith advises the Quraysh], 1:192.

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has given two interpretations for the word *yashtarī* (he buys) used in this verse.[13] First, that it refers to the actual act of purchase and the verse is referring to the purchase of qaynahs. He reports the following ḥadīth from Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī رضي الله عنه to that effect: "The sale and purchase of, and trade in, songstresses is not permissible. It was in regard to them that this verse was revealed."[14] Obviously this will apply even more to the sale and purchase of recorded music and musical instruments. According to the second interpretation *yashtarī* is used figuratively and refers to the act of making a preferred choice, and the verse is a condemnation of those who choose to play and listen to music.

Al-Ṭabarī quotes several reports—two from ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه, eight from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنهما, four from ʿIkrimah (d. 105 AH), and seven from Mujāhid (d. 102 AH)—all saying the same thing: *lahw al-ḥadīth* means ghinā'. Here is a sampling of their opinions, as quoted in *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* and elsewhere.

> ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه: "I swear by the One other than Whom there is no god, it refers to ghinā'."[15] To emphasize the point, he repeated his statement three times.

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[12] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kash-shāf*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 5:6. See also *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 16:458.

[13] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 18:532–34.

[14] Ibid. Also reported in *Musnad Aḥmad*, حديث أبي أمامة الباهلي [Ḥadīths of Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī] no. 22069, 16:224; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, كتاب البيوع ، باب ما جاء في بيع المغنيات [Book: Trade, Chapter: Sale of songstresses] no. 11056, 6:24.

[15] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 18:534–35.

> ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās ؓ: “It means ghinā’ and the like.”[16]
> Mujāhid: “It means ghinā’ and listening to it.”[17]
> Ḥasan al-Baṣrī: “This verse was revealed in relation to ghinā’ and musical instruments.”[18]

The same explanation has also been reported from Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, Mak-ḥūl, and others. After referring to some of these opinions Imām Qurṭubī says, “This is the best of what has been said in the interpretation of this verse.”[19]

To understand the full import of these opinions we need to remember that these people are the Who’s Who of Islāmic scholarship and piety. ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd ؓ was the sixth person to embrace Islām. ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ said about him, “He was filled with knowledge.” ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās ؓ was known as the Imām of *mufassirs*. The Companions had given him such titles as *Tarjumān al-Qur’ān* (the Interpreter of the Qur’ān) *al-Ḥabr* (the Great Scholar), and *al-Baḥr* (the Ocean of Knowledge).

According to some authorities the tafsīr provided by a Companion carries the weight of a saying of the Prophet ﷺ (*ḥadīth marfūʿ*). Says Ḥākim, “The student of tafsīr should know that the commentary of a Companion, since he was witness to the revelation, is considered a ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ by Imām Bukhārī and Imām Muslim.”[20] The emphatic statement of

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[16] Ibid., 18:535.

[17] Ibid., 18:537.

[18] *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 11:46.

[19] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 16:457.

[20] Al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak*, كتاب التفسير، تفسير سورة الفاتحة [Book: *Tafsīr*, Chapter: Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah], no. 150/3021, 2:283–84. Ibn Qayyim does not agree with this claim about a Companion’s commentary being considered as *ḥadīth marfūʿ* but nevertheless agrees with the conclusion. He says: “While this needs to be examined, there is no doubt that the tafsīr of the Companion is more deserving of being accepted than that of those who came later. They were the most knowledgeable in the ummah about what Allāh means in His Book. They were the first people in the ummah addressed by the Book. They witnessed its interpretation given by the Prophet ﷺ academically and practically.” See Ibn Qayyim, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:269–70.

ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه adds further weight to this view since he could not have said such a thing, so emphatically, on his own.

The two other commentators expressing the same view regarding the meaning of *lahw al-ḥadīth* are prominent *mufassirs* from the Successors. Mujāhid ibn Jabr Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Makkī (d. 103 AH) was a well-known disciple of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنهما. Sufyān al-Thawrī said, "Learn tafsīr from four people: Mujāhid, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, ʿIkrimah, and Ḍaḥḥāk." About the second *mufassir* Abū ʿAbdullāh ʿIkrimah (d. 105 AH), Qatādah, a famous *mufassir*, said, "The most knowledgeable of people in matters of ḥalāl and ḥarām is al-Ḥasan (Ḥasan al-Baṣrī), the most knowledgeable in rites of pilgrimage is ʿAṭā' (ʿAṭā' ibn Rabāḥ) and the most knowledgeable in tafsīr is ʿIkrimah."[21]

IBN ḤAZM'S RESPONSE

Ibn Ḥazm countered these commentaries by claiming that it was diverting from the path of Allāh that was condemned, and not music per se. The condemnation would apply to any other form of distraction as well. Conversely it would not apply to music when that was not a cause of diversion. His argument essentially has two parts. One, *lahw al-ḥadīth* is not always forbidden. Two, it does not necessarily mean ghinā'.

A discussion of the claim that *lahw al-ḥadīth* would be forbidden only when it was a cause of actual diversion from the path of Allāh will take us into the intricacies of the principles of jurisprudence. These principles deal with the derivation of inferred meaning from legal source texts. This is an involved subject and what follows here is a simplification. Specifically we are dealing here with a mode of interpretation of source texts called *mafhūm al-mukhālafah,* or the implied opposite. This is itself an extension of implied ruling or *dalālat al-naṣṣ* in Ḥanafī terminology and *dalālat al-mafhūm* in Shafiʿī terminology. For example the Qur'ān says regarding one's parents, "Do not say ugh to them and do not scold them."

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[21] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā',* عكرمة مولى ابن عباس [ʿIkrimah Mawlā Ibn ʿAbbās], 5:17.

[22] Does it mean that it would be okay to hit them? A strict literal interpretation would answer in the affirmative but implied ruling suggests that it is not so; the prohibition is implied in the words of the Qur'ān. Any hurt greater than what has been explicitly prohibited will also be prohibited. There is consensus on such derivation.

We lose the consensus when we move to *mafhūm al-mukhālafah* or implied opposite, which is premised on the assumption that the opposite ruling is implied in the case when the conditions specified in the source text for the original ruling are not met. For example the Qur'ān says:

قُل لَّآ أَجِدُ فِي مَآ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَىٰ طَاعِمٍ يَطۡعَمُهُۥٓ إِلَّآ أَن يَكُونَ مَيۡتَةً
أَوۡ دَمٗا مَّسۡفُوحًا

> Say, "I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything (out of the cattle under discussion) prohibited for anyone who eats it, unless it be carrion or blood that pours forth."[23]

Applying implied opposite one could conclude that the blood which does not pour forth will not be prohibited. This would of course oppose the obvious meaning of this verse and no one accepts this interpretation.

It is this logic that is being invoked here. The claim is that when *lahw* does not cause a distraction from the path of Allāh, then it is not prohibited. Ḥanafīs do not accept *mafhūm al-mukhālafah* as a valid method of deriving legal rulings from the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Shafiʿīs do accept it but impose several restrictions so it will not lead to such results as noted above. Among them is the condition that the opposite meaning should not oppose another textual ruling. Thus Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1448), a prominent Shafiʿī scholar, rejects the application of this method in this case. He says, "Every distraction whose prohibition is based on the *naṣṣ* (source text, i.e. the Qur'ānic verse here) remains false (and condemned) whether or not it actually causes a distraction

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22. *Al-Qur'ān*, Al-Isrā' 17:23.
23. *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Anʿām 6:145.

in a particular case."[24] In other words it is like the prohibition of wine, which does not depend upon the actual realization of intoxication in its consumer.

As for the second part of Ibn Ḥazm's argument, it amounts to claiming that a general injunction against distractions excluded one of its most potent forms.

QUR'ANIC WARNING AGAINST DISTRACTIONS

Looking at the Qur'ānic use of the words *lahw* and *la'ib* is also helpful to further our understanding of this issue. *Lahw* is anything that absorbs a person to such an extent that he forgets other important and serious things. In other words it is a distraction. For that reason the word is used for pastimes and amusements. *La'ib* means play. While some distractions are useful and healthy and some play is needed for rejuvenation of our bodies and minds, for the most part they are problematic. It is significant that in the Qur'ān these words are mostly mentioned in a negative light, while *la'ib* has been mentioned as a permissible activity only once.[25] Further, they have never been used in the Qur'ān to describe the life in the Hereafter.

The reason lies in the nature of this world. A very beautiful description of this world and its comparison with the Hereafter is given in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd.

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[24] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الإستئذان، باب كل لهو باطل إذا شغله عن طاعة الله [Book: Seeking Permission, Chapter: Every *lahw* is false when it distracts from obedience to Allāh] no. 6079, 11:94.

[25] The verse is "Send him with us tomorrow, that he may eat and play." (*Al-Qur'ān*, Yūsuf 12:12). This was stated by the brothers of Yūsuf ﵇ when they sought permission to take him with them for a picnic. Al-Māwardī says they meant permissible play, which is why Sayyidunā Ya'qūb ﵇ did not object to it (*Al-Nukat wa 'l-'Uyūn*, Sūrah Yūsuf, verse 12).

ٱعْلَمُوٓا۟ أَنَّمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِى ٱلْأَمْوَٰلِ وَٱلْأَوْلَٰدِ ۖ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ ٱلْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُۥ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَىٰهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَٰمًا ۖ وَفِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَرِضْوَٰنٌ ۚ وَمَا ٱلْحَيَوٰةُ ٱلدُّنْيَآ إِلَّا مَتَٰعُ ٱلْغُرُورِ ﴿٢٠﴾

> Know that the worldly life is but *la'ib* and *lahw*, pomp and mutual boasting, and a rivalry in wealth and children. It is as a rain whose vegetation pleases the farmers, then it withers, and you see it turning yellow, then it becomes straw. And in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment (for the disbelievers), and forgiveness from Allāh and (Allāh's) pleasure (for the righteous believers). The worldly life is nothing but a material of deception.[26]

This deception comes from the fact that despite its appearance this world was not created as a sport.

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَٰعِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

> We did not create the heavens and the earth and what lies between them for play.[27]

Our great challenge is to keep our minds focused on the Hereafter, and not let the attractions and amusements of this world come in the way. Anyone who devoted all his energies and resources to this life will find that his life was a total waste. Hence the constant cautions about distractions.

On the other hand there are some beneficial activities that appear to be lahw. These have been exempted from censure in a couple of aḥādīth. According to one such ḥadīth reported by ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir ﵁, "Every *lahw* that a Muslim man may get involved in is false except archery, horse training, and dalliance with one's wife."[28]

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[26] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Ḥadīd 57:20. See also al-Anʿām 6:32, al-ʿAnkabūt 29:64, and Muḥammad 47:36.

[27] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Anbiyā' 21:16; also al-Dukhān 44:38.

[28] ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir ﵁ in *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, كتاب الجهاد، باب الرمي في سبيل الله [Book: Jihad, Chapter: Archery in the Path of Allāh], no. 2918. Also, see *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, كتاب فضائل الجهاد، باب ما جاء في فضل الرمي في سبيل الله [Book:

This is not an all-inclusive list. But it is indicative of the types of activities that are exempted; the common element in them is that they are beneficial and productive and meet the higher objectives of the Sharīʿah, although they may have the appearance of being just entertainment and fun. The permitted forms of ghinā', as we shall see below, fall under the exemptions for the same reason. But for the most part ghinā' is *lahw*, and *lahw* is problematic; it is part of the "material of deception" that we have been warned about.

Verse 2: Avoiding Frivolities

وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَشۡهَدُونَ ٱلزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّواْ بِٱللَّغۡوِ مَرُّواْ كِرَامٗا ﴿٧٢﴾

> Those who witness no *zūr* and whenever they pass by [people engaged in] *laghw*, pass on with dignity.[29]

These are among a list of praiseworthy attributes of the believers. As this verse shows these include their avoidance of two loathsome things—*zūr* (falsehood) and *laghw* (frivolity). While *zūr* may seem to be a general term, Qur'ānic commentators have offered several specific interpretations. Al-Māwardī has listed seven: polytheism, non-Muslim festivities, ghinā', vulgar gatherings, games of the Jāhiliyyah period, lies, and gatherings of the unbelievers in which the Prophet ﷺ was cursed.[30] Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah lists only two: lahw and ghinā'.[31] A similar statement was made by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.[32] The rationale for characterizing ghinā'

Virtues of Jihad, Chapter: What has come with regards to the virtues of archery in the path of Allāh], no 1737; and *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند الشاميين، حديث عقبة بن عامر رضي الله عنه [Musnad of the People of al-Shām, the Ḥadīths of ʿUqbah ibn ʿĀmir رضي الله عنه].

[29] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Furqān 25:72.

[30] Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa 'l-ʿUyūn*, Sūrah al-Furqān, verse 72. Other commentators have also listed multiple explanations for *zūr*. However all of these include ghinā'. See, for example, the tafsīrs of Ibn al-Jawzī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, Abū Ḥayyān, Suyūṭī, and Ālūsī.

[31] Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Furqān, verse 72 by al-Suyūṭī (11:227); Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (9:2737); and al-Zamakhsharī (4:373).

[32] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, من سورة الفرقان [Sūrah al-Furqān], 3:448.

as *zūr* or falsehood may be that ghinā' is a distraction from the truth. This is not to reject other possible interpretations. Rather the suggestion is that the believer stays away from falsehoods in all their forms including ghinā'. By declaring that the believers do not witness *zūr*, the Qur'ān has provided a clear prohibition of attending the gatherings of *zūr*, which include musical concerts.

Regarding the second part of the verse that deals with *laghw*, there is a ḥadīth suggesting it includes ghinā'. ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd ؓ once chanced upon a ghinā' gathering and quickly moved away from it. The Messenger ﷺ, upon learning about the incident, said, "Ibn Masʿūd behaved in a noble manner." Then he recited this verse.[33]

According to al-Ṭabarī, *laghw* means all speech and actions that are baseless or abhorrent, which includes listening to ghinā'.[34] We do not need to belabor this point because the proponents of music have conceded this much. But they argue that anything considered *laghw* is neither beneficial nor harmful and therefore it remains permissible. Imām al-Rāzī responds that the more correct statement is that *laghw* is every thing that deserves to be terminated and abandoned. This meaning is contained in the word itself for *yulghā* means terminated or annulled.[35] Al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685 AH) says the same thing: "*Laghw* is what should be thrown and discarded."[36] This should be obvious from this verse as well; it is praising the believers for staying clear of things considered *laghw*.

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[33] *Tafsīr Ibn ʿAṭiyyah* (4:222) mentions ghinā' while reporting this incident. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (17:526) and *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (10:332) mention *lahw*. See their tafsīrs for this verse.

[34] *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, Sūrah al-Furqān, verse 72, 17:525.

[35] *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī*, Sūrah al-Furqān, verse 72, 24:113.

[36] *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, Sūrah al-Furqān, verse 72.

VERSE 3: THE SHAYṬĀNIC VOICE

وَٱسۡتَفۡزِزۡ مَنِ ٱسۡتَطَعۡتَ مِنۡهُم بِصَوۡتِكَ

> Lead to destruction with your (seductive) voice those of them whom you can.[37]

This is from the five verses in Sūrah al-Isrā' that are describing the story of creation. After Shayṭān refuses to prostrate to Adam, he asks Allāh for respite until the Last Day so he could misguide the children of Adam. This is granted. Then Allāh tells him that he can use all the weapons at his command for this purpose; Hell has ample space for those who would decide to follow him. But he will have no power over the true servants of Allāh. Among the weapons of Shayṭān is his *ṣawt* or voice as mentioned here. It refers to the calls of Shayṭān for sin in all their forms, from whispers to loud music and every decibel in between.

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās ﵄ gave the general interpretation (all calls for sin) for the word *ṣawt* while Mujāhid and Ḍaḥḥāk referred specifically to music. Mujāhid interpreted *ṣawt* as ghinā', mazāmīr, and lahw.[38] Ḍaḥḥāk interpreted it as mizmār (flute).[39] Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said it referred to duff.[40] These interpretations serve to remind us that musical sounds are among the powerful weapons of Shayṭān.

This verse also negates the idea that human beings are helpless creatures in the face of Shayṭānic attacks; rather, they are fully responsible for their actions and will be punished when they choose to follow the Shayṭānic call.

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[37] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Isrā' 17:64.

[38] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Isrā', verse 64, 13:118.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:286. The permissibility of duff is limited to special occasions and is subject to restrictions. Beyond those it remains subject to censure as this statement from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī shows.

VERSE 4: CONDEMNATION OF VAIN PLAY

أَفَمِنْ هَٰذَا ٱلْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَأَنتُمْ سَٰمِدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

> Do you then wonder at this discourse, and laugh (at it), and not weep, while you are engaged in vain play? [41]

These are the ending verses of Sūrah al-Najm, which was revealed in the fifth year of Prophethood. The Sūrah presents basic Islāmic beliefs in a very powerful manner and then rebukes the unbelievers for ignoring and ridiculing the Islāmic message. The Prophet ﷺ recited the Sūrah in the Kaʿbah to a gathering of the Quraysh who were so overwhelmed that they impulsively prostrated when the Prophet ﷺ did at the end of his recitation. This was an exception because normally the Quraysh used to resort to music and other distractions when the Qur'ān was recited. This is mentioned here as vain play. The word in Arabic is *sāmidūn* which is the plural of *sāmid*. The root word *samada* variously means ignoring, raising one's head proudly, distracting, and ghinā'. The last meaning is according to the Himyarite dialect of Yemen.[42]

It goes without saying that a condemnation in the Qur'ān implies prohibition.[43] Thus this verse indicates a general prohibition of *sumūd,* and ghinā' is prominent among its multiple interpretations.

Some have argued that this does not indicate prohibition; otherwise laughing and not crying should also be prohibited. But this argument ignores a basic difference between indulging in music on the one hand and laughing or not crying on the other. The latter are a reaction to something that *reflects* lack of interest and respect, while the former is an independent action that *causes* lack of interest and respect. Obviously a solution to the problem would focus on eliminating the cause.[44]

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[41] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Najm 53:59–61.

[42] *Tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Najm, verse 61 in the tafsīrs of al-Ālūsī, al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Māwardī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, and al-Shawkānī. Imām al-Qurṭubī writes: "Saying أسمدينا (*asmidīnā*) to a songstress means enchant us with your singing."

[43] Al-Ḥasanī, *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 161.

Ibn Qayyim has very beautifully described this causal relationship. He says that one of the corruptions caused by music is that it makes the heart less able to listen to the Qur'ān and reflect on it. As a person's interest grows in music, his distance from the Qur'ān grows with it. The road to the Qur'ān may be blocked as long as one's indulgence in music continues. Everyone knows this in the heart of their hearts. Whenever music and the Qur'ān gather in one place, one of them will expel the other. There can be no peaceful coexistence between them, only perpetual war.[45]

The next two verses deal with two other issues related to the issue of music.

VERSE 5: PROHIBITION OF SOFT SPEECH BY WOMEN FOR MEN

يَٰنِسَآءَ ٱلنَّبِيِّ لَسۡتُنَّ كَأَحَدٖ مِّنَ ٱلنِّسَآءِ إِنِ ٱتَّقَيۡتُنَّۚ فَلَا تَخۡضَعۡنَ بِٱلۡقَوۡلِ فَيَطۡمَعَ
ٱلَّذِي فِي قَلۡبِهِۦ مَرَضٞ وَقُلۡنَ قَوۡلٗا مَّعۡرُوفٗا ٣٢

> O wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women, if you observe *taqwā* (righteousness). So, do not be too soft in your

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[44] Islām has addressed the issues of laughing and crying as well. Muslims are encouraged to smile but told to avoid the excess of laughing. There are aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ that suggest that excessive laughing makes the heart die. This is a spiritual death. It is also reported that after these verses were revealed the Prophet ﷺ was never seen laughing; he only smiled (*Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*). As for crying, the Prophet ﷺ said: "This Qur'ān has been revealed to instill fear of Allāh. So when you read the Qur'ān then cry and if you cannot do that then make the appearance of crying" (narrated by Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ ؓ in *Tafsīr Ibn 'Aṭiyyah*).

[45] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل من مفاسد الغناء أنه يثقل على القلوب الفكر في معاني القرآن [Section: Among the problems caused by ghinā' is that it makes it burdensome for the heart to reflect on the meanings of the Qur'ān], 98.

> speech, lest someone having disease in his heart should develop fancies (about you); and do speak with appropriate words.[46]
>
> وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِن زِينَتِهِنَّ
>
> And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known.[47]

These verses are dealing with the issue of hijab and unequivocally prohibit female singers entertaining men. An important pillar in Islām's reform of the society, hijab is all about blocking the attractiveness of a woman from other men. That attractiveness has a very useful purpose within marriage and a very destructive role outside it. Of course a woman's beautiful voice and seductive tones can go a long way in creating that attractiveness. Al-Ṭurtūshī asks is there another form of soft speech more deserving of prohibition than singing.[48]

The first verse addresses the Mothers of the Believers because they were the exemplars for all the women in the Ummah.[49] They are told that it is inappropriate for a woman to talk softly to other men. She must guard against the least bit of attractiveness in her voice and tone when she speaks to the men for whom the laws of hijab apply. This includes all men who are not *maḥram*[50] to her. In talking to them out of necessity her words should be proper, her tone very plain and unattractive on purpose. This verse alone spells the end of a songstress's career and of every musical program employing women singers for male or mixed audiences. So even if there were no restrictions on music in Islām, its teachings on hijab would be sufficient to cripple the music enterprise as it exists today.

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[46] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Aḥzāb 33:32.

[47] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Nūr 24:31.

[48] Al-Ṭurtūshī, *Kitāb Taḥrīm al-Ghinā'*, 200.

[49] Some people in our times have resorted to a literalist interpretation of this verse as a way out of the requirements of hijab. Little do they realize that the Prophet's household was the model household for every Muslim home.

[50] Maḥram relatives include her husband as well as close relatives like brothers and father who are legally unmarriageable to her.

The second verse goes further; not only their voice, but also any attractive sound that may emanate from them, like the sound of their jewelry, should not reach other men. If the jewelry is not meant to create sounds they can wear it but they should take precaution that they do not stamp their feet and create rattling sounds. If it is the type meant to create musical sounds, like bells, it is simply not permitted.

It is because of these verses that even those who have argued for the permissibility of music and singing have declared singing by women for men as prohibited. They also prohibit mixed gatherings of men and women.

Verse 6: Condemnation of Whistling and Clapping in Worship

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمۡ عِندَ ٱلۡبَيۡتِ إِلَّا مُكَآءٗ وَتَصۡدِيَةٗۚ فَذُوقُواْ ٱلۡعَذَابَ
بِمَا كُنتُمۡ تَكۡفُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

> And their prayer near the House was nothing but whistling and clapping. So, taste the punishment, because you used to disbelieve.[51]

This verse describes pagan worship. The pagan Arabs used to be playing when they thought they were praying. This corruption of worship is very instructive about human nature and human history.

Except for the atheists of recent vintage, nearly all human societies have engaged in worship. The belief in God is embedded in our nature, as is the need to worship Him. But our intellect is not a sufficient guide in these matters. We cannot determine through it the correct attributes of God, or our proper relationship with Him, or the correct way of worshiping Him. It is only revealed knowledge, as it came through the prophets, that can guide us on these matters.

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[51] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Anfāl 8:35.

However, people often lost the message and corrupted the teachings as time passed after a prophet left this world. This is what happened to the people of Arabia as well. What emerged then was the result of a conflict between the pure divine guidance and human lusts and desires. It transformed worship from a very serious act of submission to God to one of entertainment and self-gratification. Whistling, clapping, dancing, and music entered the arena.

This verse provided an abiding barrier against such corruption under Islām. Consequently, as mentioned previously, unlike other religions Islām's acts of worship have remained music-free.

Verses Indicating Permission

There are no verses in the Qur'ān that explicitly declare ghinā' or malāhī as desirable or permissible. However it has been claimed, mostly by some Sufis, that some verses imply that. We look at these verses here.

VERSE 1: ADDITION TO THE CREATION

ٱلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ ٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُو۟لِىٓ أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَىٰ
وَثُلَٰثَ وَرُبَٰعَ ۚ يَزِيدُ فِى ٱلْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَآءُ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

> All praise belongs to Allāh, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, who appoints the angels as messengers having wings, in twos, threes and fours. He adds to the creation what He wills. Indeed, Allāh is powerful over every thing.[52]

The following verse of Sūrah Luqmān is added to the argument:

إِنَّ أَنكَرَ ٱلْأَصْوَٰتِ لَصَوْتُ ٱلْحَمِيرِ

> The harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass.[53]

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[52] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Fāṭir 35:1.

[53] *Al-Qur'ān*, Luqmān 31:19.

Obviously these verses are not discussing the issue of ghinā'. However, the argument says that "addition to the creation" refers to a good voice while a bad sound has been condemned in the second verse. Together the verses show the desirability, and hence permissibility, of listening to a good voice.

There is no doubt that a good voice is a blessing, that good sounds please us, and that nobody wants to listen to bad sounds. But deciding the issue of permissibility on that basis is something else. For, if whatever feels good to the ear must be permissible then whatever feels good to the eye or touch should also be permissible by the same logic.

The use of the second verse is problematic for another reason. This verse is discussing not virtuosity or one's skill (or lack there of) in music-making, but the virtue of humility and the undesirability of being louder than necessary. As a rule we are not condemned for things beyond our control. A person's natural voice is not of his own creation and therefore he cannot be condemned for it. But his use of that voice is. Hence the command that immediately precedes it: "Lower your voice." It is ironic that anyone should try to use that very command in support of *raising* one's voice in singing.

Clearly there are legitimate uses of a good voice, like its use for reciting the Qur'ān or a good poem. But a good voice is not its own justification for any use one may fancy. The verse mentions a blessing. Trying to justify its employment in questionable or prohibited avenues is hardly the gratitude that we should exhibit in response.

VERSE 2: MILD REBUKE FOR AMUSEMENT

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَٰرَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا ٱنفَضُّوٓا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَآئِمًا ۚ قُلْ مَا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ ٱللَّهْوِ
وَمِنَ ٱلتِّجَٰرَةِ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ خَيْرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

And when they see some merchandise or amusement, they break away to it, and leave you (O Prophet) standing. Say, "What is

> with Allāh is much better than amusement and merchandise, and Allāh is the best giver of sustenance."[54]

This verse refers to a particular incident, whose details are given in many tafsīr books. The Prophet ﷺ was delivering his ***khuṭbah*** for the Jumuʿah prayer when a trade caravan, led by Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī,[55] arrived near the Masjid. As was customary, drums announced its arrival. People had been facing hunger as food was in short supply and prices had soared. They had been eagerly waiting for this caravan that brought food and cooking oil from al-Shām. So, on hearing that it had arrived, they impulsively ran for it. According to the majority of reports only twelve Companions were left in the Masjid—Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthmān, ʿAlī, Ṭalḥah, Zubayr, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, ʿUbaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ, Saʿīd ibn Zayd, Bilāl, and ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنهم according to one report and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه according to another.[56]

It was a serious offence. The Prophet ﷺ said, "If all of them had left, the entire Madīnah valley would have engulfed them in fire."[57] Yet there were mitigating circumstances because of the extreme hardship people had been facing. Thus they were not punished but only admonished and reminded that what is with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى is better than everything in this world.[58]

Scholars have noted that in the beginning of the verse trade was mentioned first because that was their real motive. In the admonishment the order was reversed and lahw was mentioned first because it is more condemnable.[59]

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[54] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Jumuʿah 62:11.

[55] Diḥyah ibn Khalīfah al-Kalbī later accepted Islām and turned out to be among the prominent Companions.

[56] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah, verse 11, 20:478.

[57] Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kash-shāf*, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah, verse 11, 6:10.

[58] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah, verse 11, 20:478–79.

[59] Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah, verse 11, 28:417. However it should be kept in mind that the lahw mentioned in this verse did not refer to singing and music.

AL-ĀLŪSĪ'S CRITICISM OF AL-NĀBULSĪ

While the verse was revealed to make people turn to Allāh ﷿ and away from trade or amusement, some people have tried to extract a justification for amusement from it. They argue that the way lahw has been mentioned here shows there is basically nothing wrong with it. The first to do that was Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, who is probably the most controversial of the proponents of ghinā'.[60] ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī borrowed this argument in his defense of samāʿ, and the widely circulated fatwa of al-Azhar also cites it as a legitimate argument. This reasoning has been strongly refuted by al-Ālūsī who comments:

> Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī, may Allāh forgive him, argued for the permissibility of lahw from this verse on the ground that the use of comparative form requires the affirmation of the basic goodness of (the less preferred option, that is) lahw, like trade. (In other words since the Qur'ān says that what is with Allāh is better than lahw and trade therefore all three must be permissible). And you know that that is based on a claim and a delusion. Even stranger is his argument from the conjunction between permissible trade and lahw in the beginning of the verse. And still more strange is that he wrote epistles to show their permissibility that are used by a group attributed to Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī. These epistles revolve around arguments that are weaker than the waist of the baby gazelles with their impish swing (born of their weakness). These are baseless lies that no sane person can accept. [61]

Al-Ālūsī did not feel the need to give a response to the argument of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī; it was sufficient to mention that it was obviously absurd. For, if we accept the logic we can also declare that everything in the world is permissible. The Qur'ān says,

وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

The Mercy of your Lord is better than what they accumulate.[62]

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[60] For more on him see chapter 9.

[61] Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah, verse 11, 28:417.

[62] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Zukhruf 43:32.

Using this logic, one could claim that whatever he accumulates must be permissible because it has been compared with the mercy of Allāh.

As for the argument that lahw should have been strongly condemned on the occasion, and since it was not, it must be permissible, it should be noted that the lahw in question was the beating of drums to announce the arrival of the caravan. It was not a music concert. People did not leave because they loved to listen to the beating of drums; they did because they wanted to get the necessary food items.[63]

In this connection we should also reflect on this verse:

رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَٰرَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ

> Men whom no trade or sale distracts from the remembrance of Allāh.[64]

Trade is permissible. But it is the part in it that can cause a distraction from Allāh's remembrance that we are cautioned against. What, then, will Islām's view be of an activity that is distraction by definition?

Then, as now, there was an economic factor as well in the errant Sufi enterprise. It is obvious that affluence makes it easier for people to indulge in the pursuit of pleasure. However, the prick of conscience can restrict one's enjoyment. So people seek those who can assuage their guilt and assure them of the permissibility and even desirability of their activities. Not surprisingly the errant Sufis did have a sponsor in the affluent classes. Commenting on that al-Ālūsī says:

> And I do not think what they do is anything but a net to catch the bird of sustenance while the ignorant people think their acts are free from bondage (to worldly desires). So be aware, never incline toward that and have your trust in Allāh, the Master

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[63] The verse itself points to this by using the words "*infaḍḍū ilayhā*" (they turned to it), where "*hā*" in "*ilayhā*" is the feminine pronoun referring to the *tijārah,* or trade.

[64] *Al-Qur'ān,* al-Nūr 24:37.

> Who is the best of those who provide sustenance. To Him make all your efforts and from Him seek provisions.[65]

Here he has very beautifully directed our attention to the last part of the same verse whose initial part was being misused by errant Sufis.

Today the economic motive behind indulgence in music is stronger than ever. The comments of al-Ālūsī are a pertinent reminder to all those who trade in *lahw.*

VERSE 3: PRAISE FOR LISTENING

ٱلَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ ٱلْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُۥٓ ۚ أُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ هَدَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ۖ وَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ
هُمْ أُو۟لُوا۟ ٱلْأَلْبَـٰبِ ﴿١٨﴾

> Those who listen to the Word, then, follow the best of it. Those are the ones whom Allāh has guided, and those are the ones who possess understanding.[66]

The argument here is centered on *al-qawl* or the word. It has been claimed that the "*al*" in it is the *lām* of *istighrāq*. That is, it is meant to generalize. Hence it refers to all kinds of words. Listening to everything thus becomes not only permissible but even desirable.

It is difficult to imagine that anyone could seriously hold the view that listening to everything is commanded and is a means of getting guidance. But the claim has been made; some have even related this *"al-qawl"* to the *qawwāl*, or the singer of the so-called Sufi songs. So let us look at this verse a little more closely.

What does *"al-qawl"* mean here? The same as it does in the following verse:

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[65] Al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, Sūrah al-Jumuʿah, verse 11, 28:417.

[66] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Zumar 39:18.

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا۟ ٱلْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَآءَهُم مَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ ءَابَآءَهُمُ ٱلْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

> Then, is it that they did not ponder over the Word (of Allāh), or has anything (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old?[67]

And this:

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ ٱلْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

> And We have conveyed (Our) Word to them one after the other, so that they may receive the admonition.[68]

In both, "*al-qawl*" means the Word of Allāh. This should be obvious from the context as well. The sūrah begins with these verses: "This is the revelation of the Book from Allāh, the Mighty, the Wise."[69] Then it talks about the creations of Allāh, and the importance of worshiping Him alone. It talks about the terrible fate of those who refuse to listen and then praises those who do:

> And those who abstain from worshipping the *ṭāghūt* and turn fervently to Allāh, for them there is good news. So, give the good news to My servants, those who listen to the Word, then, follow the best of it.[70]

Obviously the Word mentioned here is the Word of Allāh.

Conversely if we were to accept the strange argument that *al-qawl* refers to all kinds of words, then one could also argue that looking at *everything* is not only permissible but even commanded. For the Qur'ān says:

قُلِ ٱنظُرُوا۟ مَاذَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

> Say: "Look at what is there in the heavens and the earth."[71]

It also says:

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[67] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Mu'minūn 23:68.

[68] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Qaṣaṣ 28:51.

[69] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Zumar 39:1.

[70] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Zumar 39:17–18.

[71] *Al-Qur'ān*, Yūnus 10:101.

أَوَلَمْ يَنظُرُواْ فِي مَلَكُوتِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ ٱللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ

> Have they not looked into the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and into the things Allāh has created?[72]

Such a bizarre interpretation should help us understand the significance of the instruction to "follow the best of what has been sent down." For otherwise anyone can take any words and interpret them in any way he likes. It is ironic that the same verse that warns against this attitude should have been subjected to it.

Verse 4: Music in Paradise

فَأَمَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَعَمِلُواْ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ فَهُمْ فِي رَوْضَةٍ
يُحْبَرُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

> As for those who attained to faith and did righteous deeds, they shall be made happy in a garden of delight.[73]

Some *mufassirs*, including al-Māwardī, al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Shawkānī, have mentioned that *yuḥbarūn* in the verse refers to samāʿ in Paradise. There are several reports that the women in Paradise will sing in the most beautiful voices for their husbands. Like other bounties in Paradise, this will also be unprecedented.

But the argument that this mention shows the permissibility of ghinā' in this world is so obviously flimsy that Ibn Qayyim says to those presenting it that if they had kept quiet it would have concealed the weakness of their knowledge and understanding.[74] For the promise of availability of anything in Paradise does not translate into its permissibility here, otherwise silk and gold for men, and wine for both men and women, should also be permissible in this world.

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[72] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Aʿrāf 7:185.

[73] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Rūm 30:15.

[74] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل احتجاج صاحب الغناء بأن سماع الغناء من نعيم الجنة والرد عليه [Section: The argument by ghinā's advocate that it will be among the blessings of Paradise, and the rebuttal to it], 153.

Actually, the opposite is mentioned in many reports. Namely, those who partake of the prohibited things here will be deprived of their permitted versions in the Hereafter. Muḥammad ibn al-Munkadir reports:

> It has reached us that on the Day of Judgment Allāh will say, "Where are My servants who used to protect themselves and their ears from lahw and the mazāmīr of Shayṭān. Take them to the musk gardens and inform them that they have earned My pleasure."[75]

Another report adds: "After that Allāh will tell the angels, 'Let them hear My Praise and My Thanks and tell them that they will never see grief or fear.'"[76] This is referring to an auditory pleasure the like of which cannot be imagined here. A ḥadīth reported by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī affirms that this will be an exclusive privilege. It is reported by Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever listened to the sound of ghinā', will not be permitted to listen to the *Rūḥāniyyūn*." When asked who were the *Rūḥāniyyūn* he said, "They are the reciters of Paradise."[77] Imām Qurṭubī goes on to mention another ḥadīth that further substantiates this point: "Whoever drinks wine in this world will never taste it in the Hereafter and whoever (from the men) wears silk in this world, will never wear it in the Hereafter."[78] After all anyone who tries to grab a prize before the race is over is most certainly going to disqualify himself.

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[75] Quoted in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 16:460.

[76] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل احتجاج صاحب الغناء بأن سماع الغناء من نعيم الجنة والرد عليه [Section: The argument by ghinā's advocate that it will be among the blessings of Paradise, and the rebuttal to it], 158.

[77] Quoted in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 16:461. Al-Ḥakīm Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Tirmidhī should not be confused with the famous Imām al-Tirmidhī. He has his own ḥadīth collection called *Nawādir al-Uṣūl* in which this ḥadīth is found.

[78] Quoted in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 16:461. The two portions of the ḥadīth have been reported in Bukhārī and Muslim: Ibn ʿUmar in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الأشربة [Book: Drinks], no. 5634, Ibn ʿUmar in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب الأشربة ، باب عقوبة من شرب الخمر إذا لم يتب منها بمنعه إياها في الآخرة [Book: Drinks, Chapter: The one who drinks wine and does not repent will be deprived from it in the Hereafter], no. 5342; Abū Umāmah in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب اللباس والزينة ، باب تحريم استعمال . . . الحرير على الرجل وإباحته للنساء

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that the claim for permissibility of music from the Qur'ān is extremely thin while the verses in the first part of this chapter have clearly, beyond a shadow of doubt, censured *lahw al-ḥadīth*, *zūr*, *laghw*, and *sumūd*. They warn about the *ṣawt* of Shayṭān as his big weapon against human beings. Impeccable sources have linked all of these to music and ghinā'. Although multiple interpretations are possible and have been offered, this multiplicity does not amount to a rejection of music as one of those interpretations. Mufti Muḥammad Shafīᶜ, the late Mufti of Pakistan, concludes: "Thus we see that these verses, in the light of these tafsīrs, point to a general prohibition of music and singing."[79] As explained elsewhere in his book, he is referring to professional singing with or without musical instruments. There are exceptions to this general prohibition, which come from Ḥadīth. We turn to that in the next chapter.

[Book: Dress and Adornment, Chapter: Prohibition of . . . wearing silk for men and its permissibility for women], no. 5547.

[79] Shafīᶜ, *Islām awr Mūsīqī*, 102.

CHAPTER 6

ISLĀMIC SOURCE TEXTS

THE ḤADĪTH

THERE ARE ABOUT A HUNDRED AḤĀDĪTH THAT censure and prohibit ghinā' and musical instruments, and there are about twenty that show its limited permissibility for special occasions. While a large number of the former aḥādīth have weak chains of transmission, there are some among them with strong chains as well. These include the famous—and most discussed—ḥadīth from Bukhārī. Below we look at this and other selected aḥādīth and discuss their authenticity as well as interpretation.

A word of caution is in order here. The science of Ḥadīth criticism is a complex and involved subject. While my purpose here is to make the deliberations of the Ḥadīth masters accessible to the average reader, the discussion will, of necessity, become rather detailed. I have limited such treatment to those aḥādīth for which it was absolutely necessary. However, those not interested in that level of detail may choose to move to the concluding paragraph of the section discussing authenticity and concentrate more on the interpretation of the text, which follows.

Aḥādīth Indicating Prohibition

Ḥadīth 1: Prohibition of Musical Instruments (Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī رضي الله عنه)

> وَقَالَ هِشَامُ بْنُ عَمَّارٍ حَدَّثَنَا صَدَقَةُ بْنُ خَالِدٍ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ يَزِيدَ بْنِ جَابِرٍ حَدَّثَنَا عَطِيَّةُ بْنُ قَيْسٍ الْكِلاَبِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنُ غَنْمٍ الأَشْعَرِيُّ قَالَ حَدَّثَنِى أَبُو عَامِرٍ – أَوْ أَبُو مَالِكٍ – الأَشْعَرِيُّ وَاللهِ مَا كَذَبَنِى سَمِعَ النَّبِىَّ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ لَيَكُونَنَّ مِنْ أُمَّتِى أَقْوَامٌ يَسْتَحِلُّونَ الْحِرَ وَالْحَرِيرَ وَالْخَمْرَ وَالْمَعَازِفَ
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> Hishām ibn ʿAmmār said that Ṣadaqah ibn Khālid narrated to him, that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ibn Jābir narrated to him, that ʿAṭiyyah ibn Qays al-Kilābī narrated to him, that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm al-Ashʿarī narrated to him, that he said Abū ʿĀmir, or Abū Mālik, al-Ashʿarī رضي الله عنه narrated to me, and by Allāh, he did not lie to me, that he heard the Prophet ﷺ say: "There will be groups of people from my ummah who will seek to declare fornication, adultery, silk, wine, and musical instruments to be lawful."[1]

This ḥadīth is listed as a chapter introduction in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī for the chapter titled: "What was said regarding those who will seek to declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else." It contains a prophecy that some later Muslims will violate Islām's prohibitions—thereby affirming that the items listed in this ḥadīth are indeed prohibited. Out of these, the item of interest for our discussion is *maʿāzif* (plural of *miʿzaf*), which refers to musical instruments. Ḥadīth scholars have explained that *yastaḥillūn* (they will seek to make ḥalāl) means either that they will indulge in them as if they were permissible or that they will argue, through some rationalization, that they were. In either case, it is obvious that these items are prohibited for otherwise the statement will have no meaning.

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[1] Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will seek to declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5649.

This is a general statement, which indicates the general prohibition of musical instruments. (There are exceptions to this general prohibition for some instruments, especially duff, and that also when used on special occasions as mentioned in other aḥādīth. We will see that later.) It also shows their abomination, for the musical instruments have been grouped together with fornication and consumption of wine. Further, this ḥadīth gives a very clear message that prohibition does not depend upon the name of a thing but upon its nature. A ḥarām item, with any name, will remain ḥarām, although people do try to overcome prohibitions through name changes.[2]

AUTHENTICITY

This ḥadīth occurs in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, which, as most Ḥadīth authorities agree, contains only *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) aḥādīth.[3] This also applies to the aḥādīth in its chapter introductions given without a full chain of narrators and included as commentary (*taʿlīqat*), as we shall see below. Additionally, the narrators of this ḥadīth are all trustworthy. Hishām ibn ʿAmmār (d. 245 AH) was from the next generation of Successors (*tabʿ tābiʿī*) from al-Shām. Ḥadīth critics Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn (d. 233 AH), Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354 AH), and al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385) declared him reliable as did many others. He is a well-known shaykh of Imām Bukhārī.

Hishām narrated from Ṣadaqah ibn Khālid (d. 180 AH), who was from Damascus. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said, "He is trustworthy, as was his father." Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, Ibn Ḥibbān, Ibn Ḥajar, and many others also declared him trustworthy.

The next narrator is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd ibn Jābir (d. 154 AH) who was also from the next generation of Successors (*tabʿ tābiʿī*) from al-Shām. Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn, Muḥammad ibn Saʿd, and al-Nasā'ī declared him reliable. Imām Aḥmad said, "There is no problem with him."

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[2] Referring to gambling as gaming and to prostitutes as sex workers are modern day examples of the same old subterfuge

[3] Those expressing this opinion include: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, al-Nawawī, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Ḥajar, al-Suyūṭī, and many others. A few scholars like Ibn al-Jawzī and al-Dāraquṭnī have criticized some aḥādīth in Bukhārī. However Ibn al-Jawzī did not find any problem with this ḥadīth. In fact despite being a very strict Ḥadīth critic, he is strongly opposed to ghināʾ.

The next link in the chain is ʿAṭiyyah ibn Qays al-Kilābi (d. 121 AH), who was a Successor (*tābiʿī*) from al-Shām. Ibn Ḥibbān and others declared him to be strong. Ibn Saʿd said he is well known. He reported from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm al-Ashʿarī (d. 78 AH), who was sent by Sayyidunā ʿUmar ﵁ to al-Shām to teach. Finally, Abū Mālik al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAṣim al-Ashʿarī ﵁ is the famous Companion who died in the plague in 18 AH.[4]

Thus it is an authentic ḥadīth, reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī as well as in many other Ḥadīth books, through a chain of well-known and reliable transmitters. In addition to Imām Bukhārī, those who declared it to be authentic include Ibn Ḥibbān, Ḥākim, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, Ibn Taymiyyah, Imām Nawawī, Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī, Ibn Ḥajar, al-Shawkānī, and many others. Yet Ibn Ḥazm rejected it. He gave two reasons. First, Imām Bukhārī used the words "qāla Hishām" (Hishām said). Second, the narration says, "Abū ʿĀmir, or Abū Mālik, al-Ashʿarī narrated to me." It does not specify which of the two.

Both of these objections have been found to be without merit by other Ḥadīth scholars.

The point of the first criticism is that "Hishām said" is not a categorical statement that Imām Bukhārī heard the ḥadīth directly from Hishām. Maybe he heard it from an intermediate link and failed to mention it. The chain of transmission can no longer be considered continuous. The ḥadīth is therefore not reliable.[5]

There are two interrelated questions here. First, is the ḥadīth reliable in the eyes of Imām Bukhārī? Second, should we trust him even if it is?

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[4] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:55.

[5] Actually Ibn Ḥazm said that there was a disconnect between Bukhārī and Ṣadaqah. This is obviously wrong. Imām Bukhārī has clearly provided the link and it is Hishām. However what he meant was that the link between Bukhārī and Hishām is missing.

Regarding the first question it is to be noted that Imām Bukhārī has mentioned the ḥadīth in his Ṣaḥīḥ as evidence in support of the subject title. Both Ibn Ḥajar and Ibn Qayyim point out that if the ḥadīth did not satisfy his conditions for authenticity then Imām Bukhārī would not have done so. Ibn Qayyim writes:

> Al-Bukhārī had met Hishām and had received aḥādith from him . . . If he had not heard it from Hishām then he would not have deemed it permissible to use a categorical phrase (like "Hishām said") . . .[6]

Similarly, Ibn Ḥajar reports: "It is well-established according to Ḥadīth authorities that when Imām Bukhārī enters a ḥadīth categorically (with *jazm*) in his Ṣaḥīḥ as a comment, it is ṣaḥīḥ (according to his most stringent criteria), even if it is not from one of his teachers."[7] Of course the case is even stronger here as Hishām is a well-known shaykh of Imām Bukhārī.

The second question would be valid if the narrator were known to engage in *tadlīs,* which means concealing a defect in a ḥadīth.[8] Simply put, the concern here would be that Imām Bukhārī might be hiding the fact that he did not hear it from his teacher, but learnt it only indirectly (probably through a reporter of unknown reliability). That this is far-fetched may be realized by looking a little more closely into the issue of tadlīs. In his essay *Ṭabaqāt al-Mudallisīn*, Ibn Ḥajar has given a classification of those who had been found to practice it. He points out that not everyone so accused is to be rejected. Some are accepted by the Ḥadīth authorities, either because of their good reputation and relatively few cases of tadlīs, like Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161 AH), or because they reported from authentic sources only, like Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah (d. 198 AH).

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[6] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:288–89.

[7] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:55.

[8] *Tadlīs* can take three forms: A narrator may hide the fact that he did not hear it from his teacher, but learnt it only indirectly, by using the word "قال" (he says). (A person may do that to inflate the number of traditions from his teacher.) Conversely, a narrator may hide the name of a weak teacher, by using a less familiar name for him. Finally, a narrator may omit a weak link between two strong ones by using the word "عن" (on the authority of). An example may be the conversion of the link "A told us that B told him that C told him" to "A told us on the authority of C." If A and C are known strong narrators, but B is not, the purpose here would be to hide the weaker intermediate link.

But the important thing here is that Imām Bukhārī is not in any of the five categories of mudallisīn mentioned by Ibn Ḥajar. No one has ever accused Imām Bukhārī of engaging in tadlīs. There may be other reasons why he chose to use the word *qāla*, but tadlīs is not one of them.[9]

That use does give this ḥadīth an appearance of discontinuity but as the great authority in Ḥadīth methodology Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ[10] affirms, that is no cause for concern. He says: "The aḥādīth included in Bukhārī as commentary that have the appearance of discontinuity are not to be treated as being weak and disconnected."[11] This was substantiated by Ibn Ḥajar who wrote an entire book, *Taghlīq al-*

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[9] One reason may be that he did not hear the ḥadīth in a formal Ḥadīth class but in conversation or discussion. ʿAllāmah al-ʿAynī is inclined toward this explanation. See *ʿUmdat al-Qārī* no. 5590, 21:260. Ibn Ḥajar says that there may be yet other reasons, none of which makes the ḥadīth chain discontinuous. See *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:55.

[10] Abū ʿAmr ʿUthmān ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī al-Shāfiʿī (577–643 / 1181–1245) wrote the definitive guide to Ḥadīth methodology, known as *Muqaddimah Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* that remains an indispensable reference until today. Dozens of great scholars wrote abridgements, commentaries or other works derived from it. These include such giants as Al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH) (*Al-Irshād* and *Al-Taqrīb*); Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH) (*Ikhtiṣār ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*); Al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH) (*Al-Nukat*); Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 802 AH) (*Al-Muqniʿ*); Al-Balqīnī (d. 805 AH) (*Maḥāsin al-Iṣṭilāḥ*); Al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806 AH) (*Al-Taqyīd wa 'l-Īḍāḥ*); Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852 AH) (*Al-Nukat, Nukhbat al-Fikr, Nuzhat al-Naẓr*); al-Sakhāwī (d. 903 AH) (*Fatḥ al-Mughīth*); al-Suyūṭī (d. AH 911) (*Tadrīb al-Rāwī*); and many others. See Dr. Rabīʿ ibn Hādī ʿUmayr's introduction to Ibn Ḥajar's *Al-Nukat ʿalā Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*.

[11] Quoted in Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:54–55.

Taʿlīq, to provide connected chains for such aḥādīth. He quoted nine such chains for this ḥadīth. These include the report of Ibn Ḥibbān in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Qaṭṭān who heard it from Hishām. Similarly, al-Ṭabarānī reported it in his *Muʿjam al-Kabīr* from Mūsā ibn Sahl al-Jawnī and from Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad al-Firyābī, both of whom reported from Hishām.[12] Another version of this ḥadīth is reported in *Musnad Aḥmad* and *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaybah*. Imām Bukhārī himself reported another version of this ḥadīth in his *al-Tārīkh* through this chain: Mālik ibn Maryam reported from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm who reported from Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī who reported from the Messenger ﷺ: "Some people from my ummah will consume alcohol by calling it something else. Singing girls and musical instruments will be with them day and night." [13] There are other narrations as well.

Interestingly Ibn Ḥazm's criticism violates a principle that he himself asserted in his book on the principles of jurisprudence. The principle states that the particular words used by a trustworthy reporter in describing how he received the ḥadīth are not important. He writes:

> Narration means that a person listens to a trustworthy narrator reproducing ḥadīth from his book or memory. Then it is permissible for him to say "he narrated to us" or "he narrated to me" or "he told us" or "he told me" or "he said to me" or "he said to us" or "I heard" or "we heard" or "on the authority of so and so." All of these forms of narration are equal. They mean the same thing.[14]

There is agreement on the underlying principle. As Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ explains, if it is established that a reporter had met a shaykh and listened to aḥādīth from him and if the reporter is not known to engage in tadlīs then no matter what words he uses in reporting the ḥadīth from him, it is considered that he received the ḥadīth from that shaykh.[15] Thus not only does Ibn Ḥazm's criticism have no merit, but by violating his own declared principle he has shown his zeal for rejecting all aḥādīth that prohibit ghinā'.

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[12] Ibn Ḥajar, *Taghlīq al-Taʿlīq,* كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 5:17–22.

[13] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī,* كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:57.

[14] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Iḥkām,* فصل في صفة الرواية [Section: Narration], 2:146.

As for the other objection that the narrator was not sure about the name of the Companion, this is also without any merit. Since all Companions are trustworthy, it makes no difference as to which one of the two Companions was the actual narrator. Ibn Ḥajar notes:

> It is well established in Ḥadīth sciences that this uncertainty (i.e. which of the two Companions had actually narrated it) causes no harm; we should pay no attention to anyone who declares this ḥadīth defective for this reason.[16]

At the same time, based on other narrations, he concludes: "It is more likely that the narrator here is Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī who was a famous Companion."[17]

After a thorough examination of all the chains of transmission of this ḥadīth that he found through his own research Ibn Ḥajar reaches the following verdict:

> This is an authentic ḥadīth. It has no defect, and there is no cause for any attack to be made on it . . . As you've seen, I have quoted nine fully connected chains of transmission (*asānīd*) whose narrators are thoroughly dependable . . . I have in my possession yet additional chains. However, I do not like to prolong this discussion by mentioning them. What we have stated is sufficient for the sensible, thinking person. And Allāh is the Grantor of success.[18]

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[15] Quoted in Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān, *Aḥādīth Ma'āzif wa al-Ghinā'*, 62.

[16] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:57.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibn Ḥajar, *Taghlīq al-Taʿlīq*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will

And the final word on this ḥadīth from Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ was the same:

> One should pay no attention to Abū Muḥammad ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī when he rejected the ḥadīth of Bukhārī from Abū ʿĀmir or Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī . . . Ibn Ḥazm erred here on several counts. This ḥadīth is ṣaḥīḥ and continuous, meeting the requirements of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.[19]

DISCUSSION

Some objections have been raised regarding the text of this ḥadīth as well. Two are worth mentioning. First, it has been argued that this ḥadīth declares prohibition of musical instruments only when they accompany alcohol consumption since they were mentioned together. We can readily see the weakness of this argument by applying it to other cases. Thus using this logic one could claim that fornication was only prohibited when accompanied by alcohol consumption and listening to music. Similarly, using the following verses one could argue that unbelief in Allāh was only prohibited when it accompanied a failure to urge others to feed the poor:

إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِٱللَّهِ ٱلْعَظِيمِ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ ٱلْمِسْكِينِ ﴿٣٤﴾

> This was he that would not believe in Allāh Most High. And would not encourage the feeding of the indigent! [20]

The point is that when multiple things are condemned it does not mean that only their combination is to be considered prohibited. A condemnation of anything in the Qur'ān or Ḥadīth amounts to its prohibition, whether it is mentioned singly or with other things.

Second, it has been pointed out that there are some variations in the words in the different narrations of this ḥadīth. In some

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declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], 5:22.

[19] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimah*, quoted in Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, كتاب الأشربة، باب ما جاء فيمن يستحل الخمر ويسميه بغير اسمه [Book: Drinks, Chapter: What was said regarding those who will declare wine ḥalāl by naming it something else], no. 5590, 10:54–55.

[20] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Ḥāqqah 69:33–34.

reports, the Arabic word is *ḥir* (pudendum), while in others it is *khiz* (silk), which is obtained by adding two dots to the first word. Obviously this word is not central to the discussion. And as al-Shawkānī mentions, in ḥadīth narrations minor word variations are not unusual and are never a cause for rejection. Another variation of this objection is that the ḥadīth quoted in *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* does not include the key word *maʿāzif*. But the report of Abū Dāwūd does establish the chain as well as the basic statement. So it only adds weight to the other reports that were also from the same reliable sources and that do mention the word. As al-Shawkānī points out, as a matter of principle, additional text from a reliable reporter is acceptable.[21]

This ḥadīth has a central place in the discussion on music. Ibn Ḥazm rushed to judgment that there is not a single ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth that prohibits music. This ḥadīth alone is therefore sufficient to prove him wrong and destroy his claim completely. Not only is this ḥadīth ṣaḥīḥ, it categorically declares musical instruments as ḥarām. Quite naturally, the discussion has been recorded in poetry. Ḥafiẓ Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, the well-known Ḥadīth scholar who was the shaykh of Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, devoted three verses to it in his *Alfiyyah* (a discussion of Ḥadīth methodology in a thousand lines of Arabic verse). After describing the underlying principle he asks the reader not to incline toward Ibn Ḥazm.[22] Another famous line says, "*Ḥazm* (prudence) is that you do not follow Ibn Ḥazm."[23]

There are two other aḥādīth that lend further support to this ḥadīth.

> On the authority of Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī, the Messenger ﷺ said, "Some people from my ummah will drink alcohol, calling it something else. *Mughanniyāt* will be playing in front of them.

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[21] Al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awṭār*, كتاب السبق والرمي ، باب ما جاء في آلة اللهو [Book: Running and Archery, Section: What was said regarding musical instruments], no. 8/3565, 2:1760.

[22] See al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ al-Mughīth*, حكم الصحيحين [Ruling on the two Ṣaḥīḥs], 1:63.

[23] Al-Marʿashlī, *al-Ghinā' wa 'l-Maʿāzif*, 139.

> Allāh will make the earth devour some of them and some of them will be turned into apes and pigs."[24]

Mughanniyāt (plural of *mughanniyah*), means songstresses. It also means musical instruments. This ḥadīth also lends credibility to the conclusion that the narration of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghanm was from Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī رضي الله عنه. Further, it describes the close association of music and drinking, and warns of severe punishment for them. The second ḥadīth is:

> On the authority of ʿImrān ibn Huṣayn, the Messenger ﷺ said, "In this ummah there will be incidents of people being swallowed by earth, being deformed (into apes and pigs), and being rained upon with stones." A man from among the Muslims asked, "When will that be?" He replied: "When songstresses and musical instruments will appear and alcohol will be consumed."[25]

As for the deformation into apes and pigs, which has been prophesied in many aḥādīth, some commentators interpret it figuratively to refer to the attributes of mimickery and shamelessness that are a hallmark of these animals. Anyone who looks at the shamelessness displayed on television alone and the herd mentality of its audiences can immediately relate to this.

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[24] Abū Mālik al-Ashʿarī in *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, كتاب الفتن، باب العقوبات [Book: Trials, Chapter: Punishments], no. 4156.

[25] ʿImrān ibn Ḥuṣayn in *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, أبواب الفتن، باب ما جاء في علامة حلول المسخ والخسف [Book: Trials, Chapter: What has come down regarding the signs of being deformed and swallowed by earth.], no. 2373. Al-Mundhirī, *al-Targhīb wa 'l-Tarhīb lil-Mundhirī*, كتاب الحدود وغيرها ، الترهيب من شرب الخمر [Book: Ḥudūd, etc., Chapter: Admonishment against drinking wine . . .] no. 3509, 423. Al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb wa 'l-Tarhīb lil-Mundhirī*, كتاب الحدود وغيرها ، الترهيب من شرب الخمر [Book: Ḥudūd, etc., Chapter: Admonishment against drinking wine . . .] 2:605, no. 2379.

Ḥadīth 2: The Shepherd's Flute (Nāfiʿ)

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللهِ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا الْوَلِيدُ حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ الْعَزِيزِ
عَنْ سُلَيْمَانَ بْنِ مُوسَى عَنْ نَافِعٍ مَوْلَى ابْنِ عُمَرَ أَنَّ ابْنَ عُمَرَ سَمِعَ صَوْتَ
زَمَّارَةِ رَاعٍ فَوَضَعَ أُصْبُعَيْهِ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ وَعَدَلَ رَاحِلَتَهُ عَنْ الطَّرِيقِ وَهُوَ يَقُولُ
يَا نَافِعُ أَتَسْمَعُ فَأَقُولُ نَعَمْ فَيَمْضِي حَتَّى قُلْتُ لَا فَوَضَعَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَعَادَ
رَاحِلَتَهُ إِلَى الطَّرِيقِ وَقَالَ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَسَمِعَ
صَوْتَ زَمَّارَةِ رَاعٍ فَصَنَعَ مِثْلَ هَذَا

> ʿAbdullāh narrated to us that his father narrated to him that Walīd narrated to him that Saʿīd ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz narrated to him on the authority of Sulaymān ibn Mūsā on the authority of Nāfiʿ, that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar heard the sound of a shepherd's flute so he put his fingers in his ears and moved the camel he was riding away from the road. Then he kept asking me, "Nāfiʿ, do you hear it?" I was saying, yes. He kept on moving like that until finally I said, no. He then put down his hands and returned to the road saying, "I saw the Messenger ﷺ hear the sound of a shepherd's flute and he acted like this."[26]

AUTHENTICITY

As ʿAbd al-Raḥmān has shown after a detailed examination of its narrators, the chain of transmission of this ḥadīth is *ḥasan* (agreeable).[27] However a discussion about its authenticity has ensued because Imām Abū Dāwūd called it *munkar*. He did not give any reason for this designation, so this falls in the category of unexplained criticism (*jarḥ ghayr al-mufassar*), which carries less weight. Anyway, the question arises as to what did he mean by using that label? A *munkar* ḥadīth is defined to be one that is reported by a weak narrator while its text opposes a report from a trustworthy narrator. Authoritative commentaries on *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* have rejected the use of that term for this ḥadīth in this sense. The author of *Badhl al-Majhūd* says, "I did not come across any reason for designating it as *munkar*. All of its narrators are reliable and they are not opposing a reliable narration."[28] Another commentary, *ʿAwn al-Maʿbūd*, makes the same statement.

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[26] Nāfiʿ Mawlā Ibn ʿUmar in *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند عبدالله بن عمر بن الخطاب [Musnad of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﵄] no. 4535, 4:297–98; *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, كتاب الأدب ، باب كراهية الغناء والزمر [Book: Etiquettes, Chapter: Dislike of ghināʾ and musical instruments], no. 4926; Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, كتاب الشهادات ، باب ما جاء في ذم الملاهي من المعازف والمزامير ونحوها [Book: Testimony, Chapter: What has been narrated in condemnation of malāhī like maʿāzif and mazāmīr and so on], no. 20997, 10:375.

[27] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Aḥadīth al-Maʿāzif wa ʾl-Ghināʾ*, 178.

Another possible explanation is that the designation was used in its older sense. It is well-known that the Ḥadīth terminology evolved over a period of time. The earlier scholars sometimes used the term *munkar* to mean *gharīb*, i.e. a ḥadīth that has only one narrator in one or more links of its chain of transmission whether or not that narrator is reliable. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Lakhnawī cautions:

> Do not assume that the narrators of a ḥadīth are unreliable when the earlier Ḥadīth scholars label it as *munkar*. Many times they call it *munkar* to indicate that some of its links have only a single narrator (even though he may be reliable). The later scholars adopted the current definition of *munkar*, namely a ḥadīth whose narrators are weak and are opposing a reliable narration.[29]

However this ḥadīth has more than one chain so the designation of *munkar* in that sense is not valid either.[30] A more likely explanation comes from ʿAbd al-Raḥmān who quotes a letter of Imām Abū Dāwūd to the effect that he declared a ḥadīth *munkar* if it was the only ḥadīth in a chapter, even though it had a sound chain.[31] Obviously that does not affect its reliability.

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[28] Al-Sahāranpūrī, *Badhl al-Majhūd*, كتاب الأدب، باب كراهية الغناء والزمر [Book: Etiquettes, Chapter: Dislike of ghinā' and musical instruments], 19:166.

[29] Al-Lakhnawī, *Al-Rafʿ wa 'l-Takmīl*, 92.

[30] For example al-Ṭabarānī has reported it from Muṭʿim ibn al-Miqdām (*Al-Muʿjam al-Ṣaghīr*, باب الألف، من إسمه أحمد [Chapter: Alif; Names beginning with Aḥmad], 1:13). Also reported by al-Bayhaqī and Ibn ʿAsākir through strong chains. This fact also puts to rest the criticism that this ḥadīth relies solely on the narration of Sulaymān ibn Mūsā.

This ḥadīth was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Imām Ibn Nāṣir, the teacher of Ibn al-Jawzī, as well as by Imām Suyūṭī. Ibn Ḥajar mentioned it and made no comment about it, thereby indicating that he regarded it reliable. Further, two major proponents of samāʿ, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī and ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī accepted this ḥadīth.

DISCUSSION

This ḥadīth shows that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنه plugged his ears to block the sound of the shepherd's flute as the Prophet ﷺ had done in an earlier incident. These actions are very clear about extreme dislike of a flute's sound. However, the proponents of music have instead focused on the action of Nāfiʿ in the current incident and that of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنه in the previous one. Assuming that both of them continued to listen and were not asked to do otherwise, it has been surmised that the Prophet ﷺ plugged his ears probably because he was engrossed in some other thought and did not want to be disturbed. The absence of any action to stop the flute player is used to strengthen this conclusion.

However, not plugging their ears can only show that plugging one's ears when involuntarily exposed to music is not obligatory. After all, what is prohibited is listening, not merely hearing. If the sound of music just comes to one's ears without any desire or interest on his part and it is beyond his power to stop it, then he is not responsible for it. Further, as noted by Shawkānī, Nāfiʿ was a young child so his actions do not prove anything. But the fact remains that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar رضي الله عنه did plug his ears and his purpose was only to block the sound. He kept on asking Nāfiʿ whether the sound was still coming and came back on the main road when he answered in the negative. This hardly shows someone engrossed in some other thoughts.

As for not approaching the shepherd, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from it either. It is quite possible that he was far away or on a hill, where one could not even see him but only hear a distant flute sound.

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[31] Abū Dāwūd, *Risālah ilā Ahl Makkah*, 25. Quoted in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Aḥādīth al-Maʿāzif wa 'l-Ghinā'*, 180.

It is worth noting that many authorities have used this ḥadīth, along with others, as a basis for their judgement that wind instruments are prohibited. These include the following. In the Ḥanafī school: Kamāl ibn al-Hummām in his book *Sharḥ Fatḥ al-Qadīr*; Ibn ʿĀbidīn in his *Radd al-Muḥtār ʿalā ʾl-Durr al-Mukhtār*. In the Shafiʿī school: Imām Shīrāzī in his book *al-Muhadh-dhab fī Fiqh al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī*; Sulṭān al-ʿUlamāʾ ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Salām in his book *Qawāʿid al-Aḥkām fī Maṣāliḥ al-Anām*; Imām Nawawī in his book *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*; Imām Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī (known as al-Shafiʿī al-Saghīr) in his book *Nihāyat al-Muḥtāj ilā Sharḥ al-Minhāj*. In the Ḥanbalī school: Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī in his book *al-Mughnī*.[32] The Mālikī scholar Imām Qurṭubī has mentioned this ḥadīth to further strengthen his tafsīr of verse 64 in Sūrah al-Isrāʾ. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī declared prohibition of flutes on the basis of this ḥadīth.

ḤADĪTH 3: PROHIBITION OF *KŪBAH* (IBN ʿABBĀS ﵄)

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ بَشَّارٍ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو أَحْمَدَ حَدَّثَنَا سُفْيَانُ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ بَذِيمَةَ حَدَّثَنِي قَيْسُ بْنُ حَبْتَرٍ النَّهْشَلِيُّ عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ ... قَالَ إِنَّ اللهَ حَرَّمَ عَلَيَّ أَوْ حُرِّمَ الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْكُوبَةُ قَالَ وَكُلُّ مُسْكِرٍ حَرَامٌ قَالَ سُفْيَانُ فَسَأَلْتُ عَلِيَّ بْنَ بَذِيمَةَ عَنْ الْكُوبَةِ قَالَ الطَّبْلُ

Muḥammad ibn Bash-shār narrated that Abū Aḥmad narrated to him that Sufyān narrated to him that ʿAlī ibn Badhīmah narrated to him that Qays ibn Ḥabtar narrated that Ibn ʿAbbās reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Verily Allāh prohibited (or the following have been prohibited:) wine, gambling, and *kūbah*. And every intoxicant is ḥarām." Sufyān said, "I asked ʿAlī ibn Badhīmah about *kūbah*. He said it was *ṭabl* (drum)." [33]

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[32] Al-Marʿashlī, *Al-Ghināʾ wa ʾl-Maʿāzif*, 132–33.

[33] ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās in *Sunan Abu Dāwūd*, كتاب الأشربة، باب في الأوعية [Book: Drinks, Chapter: Containers] no. 3698; *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند عبد الله بن العباس [Musnad of ʿAbdullāh ibn al-ʿAbbās] no. 2476, 3:125; Al-Bayhaqī,

AUTHENTICITY

Ibn Ḥibbān and al-Nasā'ī declared this ḥadīth authentic. Abū Dāwūd and al-Mundhirī both have listed it without comment, indicating their tacit approval of its authenticity. Ibn Ḥazm rejected it by saying that Qays ibn Ḥabtar was unknown. Albānī says this shows the ignorance of Ibn Ḥazm for Qays was a well-known Successor; a large number of earlier and later scholars affirmed his reliability and reported from him.[34] Those who declared him reliable include Ibn Ḥibbān, al-Nasā'ī, and Ibn Ḥajar.

DISCUSSION

This ḥadīth shows general prohibition of ***kūbah***, which means a drum as made clear by ʿAlī ibn Badhīmah. While some people have raised a question about the definition of kūbah, it is obvious that a narrator of a ḥadīth is better qualified to explain the terms he is reporting. Additionally, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Qayyim have also asserted that it means a drum.

There are some exceptions to the general prohibition of drums although the jurists differ on those exceptions. Generally the use of drums for entertainment is prohibited while it is permitted for other purposes like announcing a wedding or waking people for the pre-dawn meal in Ramaḍān.

This ḥadīth is strengthened by some others. Here is one of them:

> It is reported from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr that the Prophet ﷺ said "My Lord has forbidden for me liquor, gambling, ***kūbah***, and *qinnīn*." And ***kūbah*** is *ṭabl* (drum).[35]

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al-Sunan al-Kubrā, كتاب الشهادات ، باب ما جاء في ذم الملاهي من المعازف والمزامير ونحوها [Book: Testimony, Chapter: What has been narrated in condemnation of malāhī like maʿāzif and mazāmīr and so on], no. 20991, 10:374.

[34] Al-Albānī, *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab*, 89.

[35] ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr in al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, كتاب الشهادات ، باب ما جاء في ذم الملاهي من المعازف والمزامير ونحوها [Book: Testimony, Chapter: What has been narrated in condemnation of malāhī like maʿāzif and mazāmīr and so on], no. 20994, 10:374.

Qinnīn means ʿūd. This further shows the general prohibition of musical instruments.

ḤADĪTH 4: TWO CURSED SOUNDS (ANAS IBN MĀLIK ﵁)

حَدَّثَنَا شَبِيب بن بِشر البَجَلِي قَال: سَمِعْتُ أَنَس بن مَالِك يَقُولُ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلّى اللهُ عَليهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَوتَانِ مَلعُونَانِ فِي الدُّنيَا وَالآخِرَة: مِزْمَارٌ عِندَ نِعْمَةٍ، وَرَنَّةٌ عِندَ مُصِيبَةٍ.

> Shabīb ibn Bishr al-Bajalī narrated that he heard Anas ibn Mālik say that the Prophet ﷺ said, "There are two sounds that are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: mizmār in joy and blessings, and wailing in adversity."[36]

Imām Haythamī comments in his *Majmaʿ al-Zawāʾid* that its narrators are trustworthy.[37] Al-Mundhirī makes the same statement in his *al-Targhīb wa ʾl-Tarhīb*. So does al-Munāwī in his *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*. He explains that mizmār here refers to ghināʾ and not the flute. The message of this ḥadīth is strengthened by the next.

ḤADĪTH 5: TWO CURSED SOUNDS (ʿABD AL-RAḤMĀN IBN ʿAWF ﵁)

عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحمن بنِ عَوْفٍ قَالَ: أَخذَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بِيَدِي فَانْطَلَقْتُ مَعَهُ إِلى ابْنِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، وهوَ يجُودُ بِنفْسِه، قَالَ: فَأَخَذَهُ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَوَضَعَهُ فِي حِجْرِهِ حَتَّى خَرَجَتْ نَفْسُهُ، قَالَ: فَوَضَعَهُ ثُمَّ بَكى، فَقُلْتُ: تَبْكِي يا رَسُولَ اللهِ، وَأَنْتَ تَنْهَى عَنِ البُكاءِ، فقَالَ:

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[36] Anas ibn Mālik ﵁ in *Zawāʾid al-Bazzār*, كتاب الجنائز، باب ما جاء في النوح [Book: Funerals, Chapter: Wailing], no. 795, 1:377; Al-Ḍiyāʾ al-Maqdisī, *al-Aḥādīth al-Mukhtārah*, شبيب بن بشر البجلي عن أنس [Aḥādīth of Shabīb ibn Bishr al-Bajalī from Anas], no. 2200 and 2201, 6:188–89.

[37] Al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawāʾid*, كتاب الجنائز ، باب في النوح [Book: Funerals, Chapter: Wailing] no. 4017, 3:100.

إِنِّي لَمْ أَنْهَ عَنِ الْبُكَاءِ، ولَكِنْ نَهَيْتُ عَنْ صَوْتَيْنِ أَحْمَقَيْنِ فَاجِرَيْنِ: صَوْتِ
عِنْدَ نِعْمَةِ لَهْوٍ وَلَعِبٍ، وَمَزَامِيْرِ شَيْطَانٍ، وصَوْتٍ عِنْدَ مُصِيْبَةٍ لَطْمِ وُجُوْهٍ
وشَقِّ جُيُوْبٍ، وهَذِهِ رَحْمَةٌ، ومَنْ لَا يَرْحَمْ لَا يُرْحَمْ

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf reports,

> The Prophet ﷺ took my hand and I went with him to visit his (ailing) son Ibrāhīm. He was in the throes of death. The Prophet ﷺ took him to his breast and held him until he breathed his last. Then he put the child down and wept. I asked, "You are weeping, O Messenger of Allāh, while you prohibit crying?" The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Verily, I did not prohibit weeping but rather, I forbade two sounds that are foolish and sinful: The sounds of musical amusement and Shayṭān's mazāmīr in time of joy and blessings; and the sound (of wailing) at time of adversity accompanied by striking of the face and tearing of garments. But this [weeping of mine] stems from compassion, and whoever does not show compassion will not receive it."[38]

Imām Tirmidhī declared this ḥadīth to be *ḥasan*. Others who agreed with this assessment include al-Zaylaʿī (*Naṣab al-Rāyah*), Ibn Qayyim (*Ighāthat al-Lahfān*), al-Shawkānī (*Nayl al-Awṭār*). Ibn Ḥajar mentioned it in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* without comments, giving his tacit approval.

The ḥadīth shows the middle path of Islām in the face of extremes of emotions. A believer continues to remember Allāh during the joys and sorrows of life. This remembrance leads to thankfulness in the former case and patience in the latter, resulting in a dignified calmness in both. On the other hand it is the severance of our connection with Allāh that leads to internal agitation. Dancing in joy and striking of one's face and tearing of one's clothes in grief result from that agitation. Music is a distraction that blocks our connection with Allāh thereby enhancing the internal agitation.

No doubt, some musical tones can lead to calmness. But the calmness coming from a remembrance of Allāh is very different from the one induced by music. The first is internal and deep-rooted. The other is imposed from outside and may be superficial.

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[38] Al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, كتاب الجنائز ، باب ما جاء في البكاء [Book: Funerals. Chapter: Crying], no. 4047, 3:108.

This does not mean that we should be cold emotionless beings. That is the other extreme that a misguided religiosity may bring. The shedding of tears by the Prophet ﷺ should wipe out any such confusion. Compassion is not only allowed, it is required. We worship a Compassionate God Who rewards compassion. Weeping in sorrow is a genuine expression of that compassion, as is humming or chanting without musical instruments in joy. This ḥadīth, which caught both the words and actions of the Prophet ﷺ in his moments of sorrow, brings to us all these profound messages.

Nothing could be clearer in the declaration of prohibition than the Prophetic words “I forbade” used in this ḥadīth. No wonder Ibn Taymiyyah writes: “This is among the best aḥādīth that are used to show the prohibition of ghinā’.” [39]

ḤADĪTH 6: BELLS (ABŪ HURAYRAH رضي الله عنه)

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ الْجَرَسُ مَزَامِيرُ الشَّيْطَانِ

> It is reported by Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Bells are part of *mazāmīr* of Shayṭān.”[40]

This ḥadīth is further supported by the next one.

ḤADĪTH 7: BELLS (ABŪ HURAYRAH رضي الله عنه)

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا تَصْحَبُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ رُفْقَةً فِيهَا كَلْبٌ وَلَا جَرَسٌ

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[39] Ibn Taymiyyah, quoted in al-Albānī, *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab*, 55.

[40] ‘Abū Hurayrah in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب اللباس والزينة، باب كراهة الكلب والجرس في السفر [Book: Dress and Adornment, Chapter: Dislike of dogs and bells during journey], no. 5670.

> It is reported by Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said, "The angels (of mercy) do not accompany a caravan that has dogs or bells."[41]

Both of the above aḥadīth are recognized as ṣaḥīḥ. In caravan travel, bells were a source of constant background music. There were also legitimate uses for them. They could scare animals of prey like wolves away from the caravan. They could also help anyone who was left behind as he could follow the sound to locate the caravan. This has led to a difference of opinion among the scholars. Imām Nawawī expresses general dislike for bells. He writes:

> As for the bells, it has been said that the reason the angels dislike them is that they resemble *nāqūs* (gong or clapper). And it has been said that the reason is their sound. The ḥadīth referring to them as musical instruments of Shayṭān supports this interpretation. Our ruling and that of Imām Mālik and others is for the general dislike of bells.

According to some other scholars their use is permissible for legitimate purposes. Shaykh Sahāranpūrī explains: "The dislike is when their use is devoid of any benefit. Their use is excused when driven by need."[42] Muftī Taqi Usmani adds: "It appears to me that the dislike mentioned in the ḥadīth is directed toward their use for entertainment and music as was the practice of some caravans . . . When the bell is meant for a legitimate purpose then there is no problem with it."[43]

The common ground between these differing opinions is that when the bell is used as a musical instrument it is disliked. This is sufficient to show the dislike of musical instruments.

While the dislike for bells is well-documented in aḥadīth, some modern proponents of music have tried to argue for their permissibility from the reports about the genesis of the call to ṣalāh. They say that some Companions had suggested use of bells and horns for this purpose, which shows that they should be permissible.

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[41] Ibid., no. 5668.

[42] Usmani, *Takmalah Fatḥ al-Mulhim*, 4:179.

[43] Ibid.

It is sufficient to look at the account of that event to see the folly of this reasoning. Shāh Waliyullāh describes what happened:

> When the Companions learnt that congregational ṣalāh is required—and it is not easy to gather people in one place and at one time except through announcement—they discussed ways of making this announcement. Some suggested a fire be lit. The Messenger ﷺ rejected that for its mimicking of the Magians. Some suggested use of horns. He rejected that for its mimicking of the Jews. Some suggested use of bells. He rejected that for its mimicking of the Christians. So they could not reach a conclusion. Then ʿAbdullāh ibn Zayd saw the *adhān* and *iqāmah* in his dream. He mentioned it to the Messenger ﷺ who said, this is a valid dream.[44]

It is interesting that any one would try to extract a ruling of permissibility for music from a rejected suggestion.

Ahādīth Indicating Permission

There are some cases where singing and use of duff are permissible. These are mentioned in generally agreed upon Ḥadīth reports. The difference of opinion here centers on the extent of this permissibility.

ḤADĪTH 1: EID (ʿĀ'ISHAH رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا)

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا دَخَلَ عَلَيَّ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
وَعِنْدِي جَارِيَتَانِ تُغَنِّيَانِ بِغِنَاءِ بُعَاثَ فَاضْطَجَعَ عَلَى الْفِرَاشِ وَحَوَّلَ
وَجْهَهُ فَدَخَلَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَانْتَهَرَنِي وَقَالَ مِزْمَارَةُ الشَّيْطَانِ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللهِ
صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ
دَعْهُمَا فَلَمَّا غَفَلَ غَمَزْتُهُمَا فَخَرَجَتَا قَالَتْ وَكَانَ يَوْمُ عِيدٍ يَلْعَبُ السُّودَانُ

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[44] Shāh Waliyullāh al-Dihlawī, quoted in Usmani, *Takmalah Fatḥ al-Mulhim*, 3:267–68.

بِالدَّرَقِ وَالْحِرَابِ فَإِمَّا سَأَلْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَإِمَّا قَالَ تَشْتَهِينَ تَنْظُرِينَ فَقُلْتُ نَعَمْ فَأَقَامَنِي وَرَاءَهُ خَدِّي عَلَى خَدِّهِ وَيَقُولُ دُونَكُمْ يَا بَنِي أَرْفِدَةَ حَتَّى إِذَا مَلِلْتُ قَالَ حَسْبُكِ قُلْتُ نَعَمْ قَالَ فَاذْهَبِي

Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها says, "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ came to me when two girls were singing the song of Buʿāth. He lay on the bed and turned his face away. Then Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه entered. He reprimanded me saying 'Mizmār of Shayṭān in the home of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ?' The Messenger ﷺ turned to him and said, 'Leave them.' A little later, when he (Abū Bakr) was not paying attention, I signalled to them and they left." She continues, "It was the day of Eid. The Abyssinians were playing in the Masjid with shields and lances. Then either I asked the Messenger ﷺ or he asked me whether I wanted to see them and I said yes. So he let me stand behind him, with my cheeks against his cheeks. He said, 'Carry on Banū Arfidah.' When I was tired, he asked, 'Is that sufficient for you?' I said yes. He said, 'Then you can leave.'"[45]

Another version of this ḥadīth has some additional details:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رضي الله عنها قَالَتْ دَخَلَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ وَعِنْدِي جَارِيَتَانِ مِنْ جَوَارِي الأَنْصَارِ تُغَنِّيَانِ بِمَا تَقَاوَلَتِ الأَنْصَارُ يَوْمَ بُعَاثَ قَالَتْ وَلَيْسَتَا بِمُغَنِّيَتَيْنِ فَقَالَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ أَمَزَامِيرُ الشَّيْطَانِ فِي بَيْتِ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَذَلِكَ فِي يَوْمِ عِيدٍ . فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَا أَبَا بَكْرٍ إِنَّ لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ عِيدًا ، وَهَذَا عِيدُنَا .

Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها says, "Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه came to me while I had two Anṣārī girls who were singing the stories of the Anṣār about the battle of Buʿāth. And they were not singers. Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said, 'Musical instruments of Shayṭān in the house of Allāh's Apostle ﷺ!' And it was the day of Eid. So Allāh's Apostle

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[45] ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الجهاد، باب الدرق [Book: Jihad, Chapter: Shields], no. 2943; Ibid., كتاب العيدين، باب الحراب والدرق يوم العيد [Book: The Two Eids, Chapter: Spears and shields on Eid day], no. 957; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب صلاة العيدين، باب الرخصة في اللعب الذي لا معصية فيه في أيام العيد [Book: Prayer of the Two Eids, Chapter: Permission for play in which there is no sin on Eid days], no. 2102.

> ﷺ said, ‘O Abū Bakr, there is an Eid for every people and this is our Eid.’”[46]

There are two incidents that have been brought together in the first report quoted above. The second ḥadīth is another narration of the first incident with some additional details. This incident involves war songs about the battle of Buʿāth. Buʿāth was a town at two nights travel from Madīnah where the last battle of the 110-year war between Aws and Khazraj took place about three years before the hijrah. Many great warriors and leaders on both sides were killed in this battle.

What we gather from the different narrations of the first event and its commentaries by the scholars is this. On the day of Eid, two girls were singing a war song in the home of ʿĀ’ishah Ṣiddīqah ﵂. As is well known, she was very young and her friends were little girls who used to come and play with her. (As al-Suyūṭī affirms the word *jāriyah* means a minor girl; *jāriyah* is to women what *ghulām* is to men.)[47] The Prophet ﷺ entered the place and ignored the singing. He was lying with his face covered and turned the other way. It was a clear indication that he was not interested but at the same time he did not prohibit it. Later Abū Bakr ﵁ entered, and seeing the Prophet ﷺ lying in bed with his face covered, he thought that he was asleep. He thus assumed that the singing was being done without the knowledge or permission of the Prophet ﷺ. He knew about the general abhorrence of ghinā’ and so his immediate reaction was to reprimand his daughter for having ignored it. At this the Prophet ﷺ came to the defense of Sayyidah ʿĀ’ishah ﵂ and explained that this was an exception to the general prohibition. Some singing and listening, within limits, was permissible on the day of Eid.

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[46] ʿAbū Hurayrah ﵁ in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب العيدين ، باب سنة العيدين لأهل الإسلام [Book: The Two Eids, Chapter: Sunnahs of the two Eids for Muslims], no. 960.

[47] Quoted in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Aḥādīth al-Maʿāzif wa ’l-Ghinā’*, 289.

PERMISSIBLE SINGING

The limits emerge from the details of the incident. Those singing were not professional singers, as explicitly stated by Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها in the second report. It was a war song, talking about courage and sacrifice and heroism, not a love song. Yet, the Prophet ﷺ was not listening to it; he had covered and turned away his face. He did not ask Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه to listen either. Further—and very significantly—he did not take any issue with Abū Bakr's figurative use of the expression "mizmār of Shayṭān." He did not say that on the contrary it was a means of getting closer to Allāh or that it was food for the soul. He only said that it should be ignored because of Eid. A little while after this conversation—which some later people would try to use as the basis for wholesale permissibility of music—we find Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها signaling the girls to leave in respect of the view of her father. If that view had been totally condemned by the Messenger ﷺ as Ibn Ḥazm claims, there would be no basis for this. Ibn Ḥajar observes:

> Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ covering of his face shows his avoiding it as his status required that he not pay attention to it. However, his not criticizing it shows permissibility for this type of singing in the form he approved as he would not have affirmed something invalid. The rule for entertainment and distractive pastimes is that one should stay away from them. Since this incident contradicts that, the exception to the rule will be limited to the time, quality, and extent of the exception shown in this incident. And Allāh knows best.[48]

It is noteworthy that even Qāḍī Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 543/1148), who stated that there is no ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth prohibiting ghinā', did recognize the limits indicated by the reference to Eid. According to him it shows the dislike of ghinā' when used on a regular basis.[49]

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[48] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī,* أبواب العيدين ، باب الحراب والدرق يوم العيد [Chapters of the Two Eids, Chapter: Lances and spears on the day of Eid] no. 926, 2:513–14.

[49] Quoted in al-Marʿashlī, *al-Ghinā' wa 'l-Maʿāzif,* 202.

IMITATION OF NON-BELIEVERS

Ibn Ḥajar notes many important lessons that we learn from this ḥadīth. In it there is guidance regarding a father's duty to teach his daughter, a husband's concern to be kind and accommodating to his wife, and a daughter's respect for her father's feelings even after her marriage. Another lesson, which is important in the context of celebrations, comes from the Prophetic statement that every people have a day of celebration, and Muslims have their own. It affirms two things. First, Eid is a day of celebration for Muslims. Second, celebrations of other peoples are for them. In other words it tells us that Muslims should stay away from imitating the non-believers or taking part in their celebrations. To stress the point, Ibn Ḥajar quotes Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī al-Ḥanafī who went to the extent of saying that a person who sent even an egg as a gift to a polytheist to honor the latter's day of religious celebration committed apostasy.

Today, if we were to remove imitation of the non-Muslim cultures, not much would remain in our "arts and entertainment" departments in the popular media. How ironic that the justification for that should be sought from the ḥadīth that teaches the exact opposite.

While the first incident involved a war song, the second involved a war exercise. The chapter title of Bukhārī "Shields and Spears" makes that clear. The Abyssinians carried out that play on happy occasions like Eid. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī quotes Zayn al-Dīn ibn al-Munayyir as saying, "They called it a play but in reality it was war training." [50]

Those who try to extract a license for their entertainment nights from this should reflect on these words from Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī:

> They Abyssinians were not dancing to music or striking their feet or pointing with calyxes (*akmām*) but they were playing with weapons for the purpose of combat readiness and weapons

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[50] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, أبواب العيدين ، باب الحراب والدرق يوم العيد [Chapters of the Two Eids:, Chapter: Lances and spears on the day of Eid] no. 926, 2:514. Zayn al-Dīn ibn al-Munayyir (d. 695 AH) was a Mālikī jurist, judge, author, and teacher in Makkah.

> training, and doing exercises in charging and escaping and stabbing and hitting. How can one compare the actions of the effeminates with those of the champions and the brave.[51]

In another report it is stated that when ʿUmar رضي الله عنه entered the Masjid and saw this, he started throwing pebbles at them to stop them. The Prophet ﷺ said to him: "ʿUmar, leave them. Banū Arfidah are protected." In the report in *Ṣaḥīḥ Abū ʿUwānah* these words are added, "They are Banū Arfidah."[52] Ibn Ḥajar explains: "It is as if he meant that it was their style, and since it was permissible they should be left alone." But he also quotes Muḥibb al-Ṭabarī as saying, "It was an indication that for them something will be ignored that will not be ignored for others, because, as a rule, the masjid should be free from entertainment. So the exception should be limited to what is explicit in the text." In other words, one should curb the tendency to extrapolate from this incident.[53]

In some narrations it is also reported that the Prophet ﷺ explained the permission by saying, "So the Jews know that there is latitude in our religion." Obviously such latitude cannot be open-ended. The proper limits of this latitude can be ascertained by looking at the words and actions of the Companions who were there on the scene.

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[51] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم وغير، القسم الثاني في سماع الغناء المقترن برقص أو نحو دف أو مزمار ووتر [Chapter 1: Categories of Prohibited Ghinā'. Category 2: Listening to ghinā' accompanied by dance, duff, mizmār, or stringed instrument], 75.

[52] Al-ʿAynī, *ʿUmdat al-Qārī*, كتاب العيدين [Book: The Two Eids], 6:392.

[53] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, أبواب العيدين، باب الحراب والدرق يوم العيد [Chapters of the Two Eids: Chapter: Lances and spears on the day of Eid] no. 926, 2:515. From the statement that they were Banū Arfidah some people have tried to extract an ideology of cultural relativism leading to the justification for all kinds of music. They claim that Islām adopts the culture of every group of people in every land. They might as well have used ḥadīth 4 below that says "The Anṣār like amusement" to declare that if anyone likes any entertainment then Islām automatically approves of it. Neither the Anṣār nor any scholars during the last fourteen centuries ever thought of this interpretation. But that can hardly deter those who are bent upon producing a new version of Islām.

There are several issues worth pondering. First, why did both Abū Bakr and ʿUmar رضي الله عنهما strongly object in the first place? The obvious answer is that they knew from Islāmic teachings that as a rule these things were objectionable. Second, what did they learn from these incidents? Ibn Ḥazm says that their criticism was rejected so they withdrew their objection. But did they take it to mean blanket permissibility as Ibn Ḥazm and his followers suggest? We find that not to be so. During their rule they did not encourage or tolerate ghinā'. We have already seen that Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه used to investigate whenever he heard the sound of duff and permitted it only if it was a wedding or circumcision. The government sponsorship of music that started in the Umawī period would have started in their time, if Ibn Ḥazm had been right.

Third, what did Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها understand from this, being at the center of the event? In fact other reports showing some permissibility (in weddings) also have come to us through her. But there is a huge difference between her views and those of the proponents of music. There is no report about her showing any interest in ghinā'. And there are many that show her opposition to it.

ḤADĪTH 2: WEDDINGS (AL-RUBAYYIʿ BINT MUʿAWWIDH رضي الله عنها)

قَالَتْ الرُّبَيِّعُ بِنْتُ مُعَوِّذِ بْنِ عَفْرَاءَ جَاءَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَدَخَلَ
حِينَ بُنِيَ عَلَيَّ فَجَلَسَ عَلَى فِرَاشِي كَمَجْلِسِكَ مِنِّي فَجَعَلَتْ جُوَيْرِيَاتٌ لَنَا
يَضْرِبْنَ بِالدُّفِّ وَيَنْدُبْنَ مَنْ قُتِلَ مِنْ آبَائِي يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ إِذْ قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُنَّ وَفِينَا
نَبِيٌّ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي غَدٍ فَقَالَ دَعِي هَذِهِ وَقُولِي بِالَّذِي كُنْتِ تَقُولِينَ

Al-Rubayyiʿ bint Muʿawwidh ibn ʿAfrā' رضي الله عنها said, "The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ came to me the day I was married and sat on the bed as you are sitting now. Some of our little girls were playing the duff and singing laments for my forefathers killed in Badr, when one of them said, 'Amongst us is a Prophet who knows

> what will happen tomorrow.' He said, 'Leave that and keep on saying what you were saying before.'"[54]

Both the occasion and the content of this singing fall within the agreed upon permissible zone. What they had been singing were the praises of those killed in Badr. Ibn Ḥajar points out that this ḥadīth shows permissibility of singing praises and laments as long as they avoid exaggeration leading to hyperbole. It also shows permissibility of announcing a wedding by using duff and permissible singing.

The next three aḥadīth also deal with the permissibility, even desirability, of these acts in weddings.

Ḥadīth 3: Duff in Weddings (Muḥammad ibn Ḥāṭib ؓ)

> عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ حَاطِبٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَصْلُ مَا بَيْنَ الْحَلَالِ وَالْحَرَامِ الدُّفُّ وَالصَّوْتُ فِي النِّكَاحِ
>
> Muḥammad ibn Ḥāṭib ؓ reports that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Duff and singing in weddings distinguish the permissible from the prohibited."[55]

This ḥadīth explains what is special about weddings. A public announcement of a wedding is necessary to separate the permissible marital relationship from the prohibited extramarital relationship. Permitting a quiet secret wedding can open the door to adultery and fornication and lead to the breakdown of the institution of marriage itself. For that reason a special exception was made for this occasion. Another ḥadīth reported by ʿAbdullāh ibn Zubayr said, "Announce the wedding."[56] This is affirmed further by another ḥadīth in *Muʿjam al-Ṭabarānī*. Sā'ib ibn Yazīd reported that the Prophet ﷺ was asked, "Do you give permission for singing in a wedding?" He said, "Yes. It is a wedding not fornication. Herald the wedding."[57] Both the question and the answer are quite revealing. The question shows that a general permission for singing did not exist. The answer shows that wedding was treated as a special case for the purpose of making it public.

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[54] Al-Rubayyiʿ bint Muʿawwidh ibn ʿAfrā' in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب النكاح، باب ضرب الدف في النكاح والوليمة [Book: Matrimony, Chapter: Beating the duff at the time of marriage and wedding dinner], no. 5202.

[55] Muḥammad ibn Ḥāṭib in *Sunan al-Nasā'ī*, كتاب النكاح، باب إعلان النكاح بالصوت وضرب الدف [Book: Marriage, Chapter: Announcing a marriage by singing and beating a duff], no. 3382; *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, كتاب النكاح، باب إعلان النكاح [Book: Marriage, Chapter: Announcing a marriage], no. 1971.

However it should be remembered that only duff playing and singing of good clean songs was permitted in weddings as explained further in chapter 10. Most of the music employed these days in weddings goes beyond the zone of permissibility.

Ḥadīth 4: Weddings (ʿĀ'ishah ؓ)

> عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّهَا زَفَّتِ امْرَأَةً إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنَ الأَنْصَارِ فَقَالَ نَبِيُّ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ
> عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَا عَائِشَةُ مَا كَانَ مَعَكُمْ لَهْوٌ فَإِنَّ الأَنْصَارَ يُعْجِبُهُمُ اللَّهْوُ
>
> Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah ؓ says that she was there to give away a woman from the Anṣār during the latter's wedding. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, "You did not have any amusement. For the Anṣār do like amusement."[58]

This is another report that indicates the desirability of publicly celebrating a wedding. It should be noted that the interest of the Anṣār in amusements was only accommodated in weddings. This was done because this accommodation satisfied some higher objectives of the Sharīʿah as discussed above. There is no ḥadīth that permits a general music and entertainment session based on this interest.

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[56] ʿAbdullāh ibn Zubayr in *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند المكيين ، حديث عبد الله بن الزبير بن العوام رضي الله تعالى عنه [Musnad of the Makkans, Chapter: Ḥadīths of ʿAbdullāh ibn Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām], no. 16075, 12:464.

[57] Sā'ib ibn Yazīd in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr lil-Ṭabarānī*, باب السين ، السائب بن يزيد الكندي بن أخت النمر بن قاسط ، خصيفة أبو يزيد عن السائب بن يزيد, no. 6666, 7:181.

[58] ʿĀ'ishah in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب النكاح ، باب النسوة اللاتي يهدين المرأة إلى زوجها [Book: Matrimony, Chapter: The women that take a woman to her husband], no. 5217.

In *Musnad Aḥmad*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, and *Muʿjam al-Ṭabarānī* this ḥadīth has been reported with the additional text that the Prophet ﷺ asked, "Did you send with her a girl that would play the duff and sing?" This and the other aḥādīth that we saw earlier show that singing in weddings is permitted for girls. There is not a single report about men singing or playing duffs in weddings during the era of the Prophet ﷺ and the Companions.

Ḥadīth 5: Weddings (ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd)

> عَنْ عَامِرِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ قَالَ دَخَلْتُ عَلَى قُرَظَةَ بْنِ كَعْبٍ وَأَبِي مَسْعُودٍ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ فِي عُرْسٍ وَإِذَا جَوَارٍ يُغَنِّينَ فَقُلْتُ أَنْتُمَا صَاحِبَا رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ بَدْرٍ يُفْعَلُ هَذَا عِنْدَكُمْ فَقَالَا اجْلِسْ إِنْ شِئْتَ فَاسْمَعْ مَعَنَا وَإِنْ شِئْتَ اذْهَبْ قَدْ رُخِّصَ لَنَا فِي اللَّهْوِ عِنْدَ الْعُرْسِ
>
> ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd said I came upon Quraẓah ibn Kaʿb and Abū Masʿūd al-Anṣārī ﵄ in a wedding. Some little girls were singing. I said, "You are from among the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and veterans of Badr. This is being done in your presence." They said, "Sit and listen with us if you wish or leave if you wish. We have been given permission for amusement in a wedding."[59]

ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd was a Successor from Kūfa. He is reporting the statement of two Companions. The objection of ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd shows that not everyone was at ease even with ghināʾ in a wedding. This was a huge change brought out by Islām since the practice was well-established in the pre-Islāmic society. The response shows that permissibility of listening to singing in weddings is an exception to the general rule of prohibition.

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[59] ʿĀmir ibn Saʿd in *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*, كتاب النكاح ، باب اللهو والغناء عند العرس [Book: Marriage, Chapter: Lahw and ghināʾ at a wedding], no. 3396.

We have seen here the aḥādīth that show a general prohibition of music and singing and those that show a limited permission for playing duff and singing on weddings and on Eid day. There are many other aḥādīth on the subject. Additionally, as Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī states, we know it for a fact that the Prophet ﷺ never listened to enchanting songs (*al-ghinā' al-muṭrib*). Everything about the life of the Prophet ﷺ has been reported including his moments of grief, sorrow, anger and joy. But there is no report that he ever listened to such ghinā'.[60]

From all this collection of aḥādīth, what we gather is that most musical instruments, as well as professional singing, have been discouraged or prohibited as a deadly distraction. At the same time, we are permitted use of some distractions to rejuvenate ourselves or for other specific and well defined purposes. These are limited to special occasions and subject to strict controls. These include weddings, Eid celebrations, travel, return from journey, hard labor, and humming or chanting for fighting loneliness. Thus, the aḥādīth showing prohibition and those showing permission are not contradicting each other, they are simply highlighting the different categories.

The Issue of Weak Aḥadīth

All the aḥādīth indicating prohibition of music listed in this chapter are sound (ṣaḥīḥ or ḥasan). This is significant since the existence of even one ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth would be sufficient to draw legal rulings from it and we have seen several here. Some support aḥādīth are *gharīb,* which is a ḥadīth that has only one narrator in some link. This does not necessarily damage its authenticity, however. The famous ḥadīth "Actions are based on intentions" is also a *gharīb* ḥadīth that has been narrated by only Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه. But no one questions its authenticity. In fact Ibn Ḥazm has used it to argue that the permissibility or prohibition of ghinā' depend upon the intentions of the listener.

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[60] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 84.

In addition there are a large number of aḥādīth indicating prohibition that are weak. We did not list them here but we do need to discuss their significance.

The general perception is that all aḥādīth prohibiting music are weak and that weak means unreliable. We have already seen that the first part of this claim is false. What about the second part, namely that weak always means unreliable? That is also untrue and to see that we need to understand what is meant when we say a ḥadīth is weak. As Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ explains, a weak ḥadīth is one whose chain of transmission does not meet the criteria set for ṣaḥīḥ or ḥasan. This is a technical designation. It does not mean that the report is certainly untrue.[61] It may be that the designation was given because the narrators are weak in character and therefore less reliable. It may also be the case that they are weak in memory although they are otherwise very trustworthy. But in either case, it does not follow that every single report from a weak reporter will definitely be false.

It is true that because of a greater possibility that a weak ḥadīth will be unreliable, legal rulings cannot be based on it without further investigation. At the same time there is a distinct possibililty that a weak ḥadīth may in fact be a true report. Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī explains that the issue of weak ḥadīth is not a black and white issue. Sometimes the presence of a defect in a ḥadīth does not warrant a total rejection; only that the ḥadīth should be rejected if another report, which is free of that defect, contradicts it.[62] When a reporter's memory is not of the best quality then the length of ḥadīth he is reporting also becomes important. He may be trusted for a short ḥadīth but not for a long one. His narration may also be acceptable if he reported the ḥadīth from a written record. If a critic declared a reporter to be weak without giving any reason for it, his criticism is also open to question. He gives many examples to establish the point that a designation of weak does not automatically end the usefulness of a ḥadīth.[63] Thus when the scholars encounter weak aḥadīth on a subject they look for other clues that may inform them about its actual reliability.

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[61] Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *ʿUlūm al-Ḥadīth*, 10.

[62] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 76.

[63] Ibid., 78.

One clue is the text of the ḥadīth, i.e. whether or not it is in accordance with basic Islāmic principles and the teachings of Sharīʿah. Another clue is the number of such reports. When a number of weak reports state the same thing, it lends credibility to the report. This we can understand from a simple example. If several people independently reported to us that there was an accident on the road, then even if the reporters individually did not meet the stringent requirements of being absolutely reliable, we would not throw away all of their reports. The multiplicity of such weak reports would point out that there was in fact truth in the essential item they were reporting. The same is true of weak aḥādīth. Thus the many weak aḥādīth on music lend credibility to each other, especially when there are other ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth on the subject as well.

In addition to the chain of transmission reported in ḥadīth narrations, which is the basis for designations of weak and sound, there is another living transmission that takes place through the actions of the scholars and the Muslim society. When a ḥadīth has been accepted by a very large number of highly respected scholars known for their knowledge and taqwā, this acceptance is in itself a proof of its validity. This is called *talaqqā bil-qubūl.* According to some ḥadīth authorities a ḥadīth enjoying *talaqqā bil-qubūl* is considered sound even though its chain may be weak. For example, after quoting the ḥadīth that says "Whoever combined two ṣalāhs arrived at a door to major sin" al-Suyūṭī writes: "Imām Tirmidhī reported it and then commented that scholars act accordingly. This comment indicates that a weak ḥadīth is strengthened by the acceptance of scholars."[64] After quoting a ḥadīth about the divorce of a slave girl Ibn al-Hummām writes, "Among the proofs of the soundness of this ḥadīth is that the scholars have followed it in practice."[65] Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī touches on this issue in his discussion of the ḥadīth, "There is no will for the designated heirs." Everyone agrees that this is a weak ḥadīth. At the same time there is consensus on the ruling based on it. (Since their shares have been fixed by the Sharīʿah, there is nothing to be added or removed from it through a will). He writes: "Some (Ḥadīth scholars) hold that when a ḥadīth is supported by actual practice, it rises from 'weak' to 'accepted'. That is my preference too."[66]

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[64] Al-Suyūṭī, *Taʿaqqubāt Suyūṭī ʿalā ʾl-Mawḍūʿāt*, 14.

[65] Ibn al-Hummām, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, كتاب الطلاق [Book: Divorce], 3:475–76.

Discussing the weak aḥādīth regarding prohibition of ghinā', Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī says the same thing. If the defects mentioned in those aḥadīth were sufficient cause for their total rejection, the scholars would not have used them. But there is a myriad of scholars who argued from these aḥadīth against ghinā'. Those who know these scholars know that it is unthinkable that they would argue from aḥadīth that deserve to be discarded.[67]

But even before acceptance by the scholars comes the acceptance by the Companions. If a particular ḥadīth is weak, but substantiated by the practice of the Companions and the Successors, then that ḥadīth is considered acceptable by the jurists. For example, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "The murderer will not inherit (from the murdered person)."[68] This ḥadīth has a weak chain of transmitters, but it is acceptable to the jurists because it was accepted and followed by the Companions.

The Companions were the people who heard and watched the Prophet ﷺ directly. Their attitudes in life were molded by him. They were his students. Obviously no one can claim to have understood the real intent of the Prophet ﷺ better than those who were there with him and had the privilege of learning directly from him. Thus to understand the issue of music it is helpful to find out what did the Companions and other early Muslims say about it. How did they view it? We do that in the next chapter.

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[66] Al-Kashmīrī, *Fayḍ al-Bārī*, كتاب الوصايا [Book: Wills], 3:409.

[67] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 78–79.

[68] Al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awṭār*, كتاب الفرائض، ١٣ - باب إن القاتل لا يرث [Book: Inheritance, Section 13: The murderer shall not inherit], nos. 1/2581 and 2/2582.

CHAPTER 7

THE VIEWS OF EARLY MUSLIMS

THOSE ARGUING THE CASE FOR MUSIC HAVE TAKEN two contradictory stands regarding the views of Companions, Successors, and other early Muslims. On the one hand they have tried to argue that their views do not count. On the other some of the proponents of music have claimed that these luminaries used to listen to ghinā' and therefore it must be permissible. This is a case of heads-I-gain-tails-you-lose. If the Companions prohibited it, their stand does not count. If they practiced it, it does.

For example Ibn Ḥazm claims: "In this no argument is acceptable for several reasons. One of them is that no person's opinion counts beyond that of the Messenger of Allāh." [1] This is regarding the verse of Sūrah Luqmān where he is rejecting the commentaries given by the Companions. This is despite the fact that the Companions were the people directly taught and trained by the Messenger ﷺ. They were also most eager to follow his instructions to the best of their ability. Their understanding of what he taught carries the most weight, as do their practices.

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[1] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā*, أحكام البيوع [Rulings of Trade], Ruling no. 1565, وبيع الشطرنج، والمزامير، والعيدان، والمعازف، والطنابير: حلال [The sale of chess, mazāmīr, ʿūd, maʿāzif, and ṭunbūr is permissible], 9:60.

As for the second claim, many reports have been circulated alleging the interest of the early Muslims in music. These reports involve such Companions as ʿAbdullāh ibn Jaʿfar رضي الله عنه, and such Successors as Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (d. 94 AH), Saʿīd ibn Jubayr (d. 95 AH), and ʿĀmir ibn Sharāhīl Abū ʿAmr al-Shaʿbī (d. 105 AH). However the only thing proven about them is their listening to permissible singing including ḥudā' or rajaz and without musical instruments. Regarding Abdullāh ibn Jaʿfar رضي الله عنه, who is mentioned the most in this regard, Mufti Taqi Usmani says:

> It is well known that he did not see anything wrong in listening to singing. But it appears that this was singing without instruments. There is not a single reliable report that he listened to instruments. I checked the reliable history books like *al-Iṣābah*, *al-Istīʿāb*, *Usud al-Ghābah*, and *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah*, and did not find any reliable report about his listening to ghinā' accompanied by instruments . . . Even Ibn ʿAsākir, who has devoted fifteen pages to Abdullāh ibn Jaʿfar رضي الله عنه in his book of history and has collected all sorts of reports, did not mention instruments.[2]

The same can be said about the Successors. Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, a well-known Successor of very high stature and one of the seven jurists of Madīnah, is on the record to have said, "I hate ghinā', and love rajaz."[3]

Saʿīd ibn Jubayr was the same way. In one of his encounters with Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, who ultimately killed him, it is said that Ḥajjāj arranged for an ʿūd and nāy to be played in his presence. When that was done, he started to cry. Ḥajjāj said, "What makes you cry? This is entertainment." Saʿīd ibn Jubayr said,

> No, this is grief. The blowing into the nāy reminds me of the Day the Trumpet will be blown (Day of Judgment). The ʿūd was made from a tree that was cut unjustly. And as for the strings,

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[2] Usmani, *Dars-e-Tirmidhī*, 3:363–64.

[3] Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab in *Muṣannaf ʿAbd al-Razzāq*, كتاب الجامع للإمام معمر بن راشد الأزدي ، باب الغناء والدف [Book: *Al-Jāmiʿ* of Maʿmar ibn Rāshid al-Azdī, Chapter: Ghinā' and duff], no. 19743, 11:6.

> they are from the guts of a goat that will be raised with you on the Day of Judgment.[4]

Apparently his references were to the oppression and injustices of Ḥajjāj. But his abhorrence of musical instruments is obvious.

The case of Imām Shaʿbī, the great Successor and Ḥadīth master, is no different. He would not stay at a dinner if they played music there. Rather he would say to the host, "Either you tell the singers to leave or we will leave."[5] Another well-known incident clearly shows his view of music. It is reported that a person once asked him a question. He replied by telling him what Abdullāh ibn Masʿūd ﵁ had said on that issue. The person insisted, "Tell me your opinion." Imām Shaʿbī said to the people present there, "Are you not amazed at this? I told him the verdict of Ibn Masʿūd and he's asking for my opinion? By Allāh, I would rather sing a song than give you my opinion."[6] The first act was reprehensible, although the second was even more so.

The value of his words may not be appreciated by those who see no problem with either. But even they will agree that his attitude about ghinā' was most probably informed by the judgment of Abdullāh ibn Masʿūd ﵁, who would not stay at a party if music was played. On one occasion he started to leave when he heard the sound of music. The host met him on the way out and asked him why he was leaving. He replied, "I heard the Messenger ﷺ say, 'Whoever increases a group's strength is one of them, and whoever is satisfied with the actions of a group is a partner in their actions.'"[7]

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[4] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā'*, سعيد بن جبير [Saʿīd ibn Jubayr], 4:331.

[5] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل قد أكمل الله تعالى الدين ولم يجعل فيه هذا السماع [Allah perfected the Religion and did not make samāʿ a part of it], 71.

[6] ʿĀmir ibn Sharāhīl (al-Shaʿbī) in *Sunan al-Dārimī*, كتاب المقدمة، باب التورع عن الجواب فيما ليس فيه كتاب ولا سنة [Book: Introduction, Chapter: Refraining from answering when there is nothing about it in the Qur'ān and Sunnah], no. 109, 1:235.

[7] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل قد أكمل الله تعالى الدين ولم يجعل فيه هذا السماع [Allah perfected the Religion and did not make samāʿ a part of

Abdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه famously said, "Ghinā' grows hypocrisy in the heart, just like water grows vegetation."[8] This statement has been reported and discussed by many authorities. Imām Ghazālī responded to it by saying that hypocrisy grows in the heart of the singer, as he receives praise from the audience, but does not affect the listener.[9] This defense can hardly be reassuring for the singer. Further, it is destroyed by another narration. In the *Amālī* of Ibn Ṣaṣrā, Ibn Masʿūd's statement is reported as follows, "Beware of *listening* to maʿāzif and ghinā' because they grow hypocrisy in the heart just like water grows vegetables."[10] As we saw earlier ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz had also stated, "Attending to instruments and listening to songs and fondness for them breed hypocrisy in the heart like water grows grass." So restricting the damage to the singer is on very thin grounds.

If the words of Ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه are not sufficient to make us realize the seriousness of the problem, his actions might be. Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham reports that the associates of Ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه used to tear up the duffs of young girls.[11] This practice is reported from others as well. ʿĀṣim ibn Hubayrah used to destroy a duff whenever he saw it. In his old age he tried to crush a duff under his feet but was unable to do so. He then remarked, "Never did Shayṭān overpower me regarding these except for this time."[12] Many later jurists gave the fatwā that there was no penalty on breaking someone else's musical instruments. These include such great jurists as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh (d. 238/853), Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 196/812), and Qāḍī Shurayḥ (d. 80/699). In an incident reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-

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it], 71.

[8] Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, *Dhamm al-Malāhī*, no. 12, p. 38.

[9] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, كتاب آداب السماع والوجد، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of Samāʿ and Wajd., Chapter: 1, Differences of scholars regarding permissibility of samāʿ and exposure of truth regarding it], 2:383.

[10] Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā, *Dhamm al-Malāhī*, footnote, 39.

[11] Ibid., no. 39, 45. There is no special prohibition for young girls. They are mentioned because it was mostly they who were carrying it.

[12] Ibid., no. 38, 45.

Bukhārī, a case was brought to Qāḍī Shurayḥ regarding a person who had broken another person's ṭunbūr. He dismissed the case.[13] Obviously this had to be based on a well established practice by the Companions.

In examining the views of early Muslims, the views and actions of the Companions who are mentioned in the reports showing limited permissibility of singing are of special interest to us. The proponents have used these reports to build their case for a general permissibility. So it is very significant that contrary to these conclusions these Companions remained opposed to ghinā' outside of those limited occasions. Many incidents regarding them are reported.

'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﵁ had tried to stop the Abyssinians on Eid day and had been corrected by the Messenger ﷺ. Yet we find that he continued to oppose music on other occasions. Whenever he heard the sound of singing or a duff he would inquire about it and punish those engaged in it unless it was for a wedding or circumcision. His son 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ﵄ once exclaimed to a group of pilgrims who were listening to someone singing: "May you go deaf. May you go deaf." He did not even like the singing of little girls. Once when he passed by a little girl who was singing, he commented, "If Shayṭān would have spared anyone, it would have been her."[14]

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah ﵂ was at the center of the reported incidents showing permissibility of ghinā' on Eid and in weddings. Yet there is a solid record of opposition from her as well. Once her nieces were in pain and the family decided to ask for a person to come and sing to them to placate them. When she went there a man with long hair was shaking his head as he sang. Upon seeing this she immediately exclaimed, "This is Shayṭān. Get him out. Get him out."[15] The report further tells us that she had initially given permission to invite someone to sing to them. It seems that the man's singing (even without instruments) had surpassed the limits of permissible singing.

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[13] *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī,* كتاب المظالم [Book: Oppressions], بَاب هَلْ تُكْسَرُ الدِّنَانُ الَّتِي فِيهَا الْخَمْرُ أَوْ تُخَرَّقُ الزِّقَاقُ . . . وَأُتِيَ شُرَيْحٌ فِي طُنْبُورٍ كُسِرَ فَلَمْ يَقْضِ فِيهِ بِشَيْءٍ.

[14] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs,* فصل في ذكر الأدلة على كراهية الغناء والنوح والمنع منهما [Section: Evidence for dislike and prohibition of ghinā' and laments], 205.

[15] Al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā,* كتاب الشهادات ، باب الرجل يغني فيتخذ الغناء صناعته [Book: Testimony, Section 64: The person who sings and takes it up as

She was also opposed to young girls wearing anklets with bells. On one occasion when a young girl wearing them was brought to her she said, "Do not bring them to me unless you remove the bells. For I heard the Messenger ﷺ say that angels do not enter the home that has bells."[16] Her nephew Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, who was brought up and taught by her and who grew up to become one of the seven prominent jurists of Madīnah, held the same view. When a person asked him about ghinā' he answered: "I disapprove of it." "Is it prohibited?" the person insisted. He replied: "Listen, when Allāh separates Truth from Falsehood, where do you think He will place ghinā'?"[17]

Sayyidunā ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه displayed the same attitude when he said, "I never sang or lied or let my right hand touch my private parts ever since I used it to pledge allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ."[18]

Among the Successors, Imām Shaʿbī said: "Allāh cursed the singer and the one for whom he sings."[19] Mak-ḥūl said: "If somebody purchased a slave girl who played musical instruments, and he died in that state then I will not pray his funeral prayer."[20] Mak-ḥūl was one of the four great jurists of his time, the other three being Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab in Madīnah, al-Shaʿbī in Kūfa, and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī in Baṣra. All four issued statements of dislike or condemnation for ghinā' and musical instruments. Ḍaḥḥāk said,

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his profession . .], no. 21010, 10:378.

[16] ʿĀ'ishah, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, كتاب الخاتم، باب ما جاء في الجلاجل [Book: Signet Rings, Section: Bells], no. 4233.

[17] Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, فصل في ذكر الأدلة على كراهية الغناء والنوح والمنع منهما [Section: Evidence for dislike and prohibition of ghinā' and laments], 205; Al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, كتاب الشهادات، باب الرجل يغني فيتخذ الغناء صناعته [Book: Testimony, Section 64: The person who sings and takes it up as his profession . . .], no. 21011, 10:378.

[18] Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Tabarī, *al-Radd*, 42. Imām Ghazālī responded to it by saying that this does not show legal prohibition. But it is obvious that it shows dislike for even personal singing.

[19] Ibid., 45.

[20] Al-Qārī, *al-Samāʿ wa 'l-Ghinā'*, 107.

"Ghinā' wastes money, angers the Lord, and corrupts the heart."[21] Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, in his characteristic way, used to remind the people who engaged in it that Allāh said about the believers that there was a known share in their wealth for the poor and the destitute. "But you have made a known share in your wealth for the songstress at times of joy and the professional wailer at the times of sorrow."[22]

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[21] Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Tabarī, *al-Radd*, 45.

[22] Quoted in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:285.

CHAPTER 8

SAMĀʿ: THE SUFI PERSPECTIVE

MUSIC FOR FUN AND ENTERTAINMENT WAS IMPORTED from Persia and Byzantium into the Muslim world and sponsored by corrupt kings beginning in the Umawī period. There was no doubt in the minds of those who engaged in it that it was wrong. However one group tried to justify music on religious grounds. These were the Sufis who were initially known as *zuhhād* (ascetics) as they had given up this world and its attractions for the sake of Allāh. The love of Allāh was the defining attribute in their lives. Some of them discovered the power of a good song in nurturing this love. To distinguish it from the sensuous singing, they called it *samāʿ*, which means listening but also refers to the spiritual songs so listened. For them samāʿ was a means of getting closer to Allāh. Its goal was to reach *wajd* or the state of ecstasy in which a person becomes totally absorbed in the love of Allāh.[1]

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[1] According to Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī *samāʿ* means both listening and understanding. It is in the latter sense that the word has been used in verse 8:23 (Surāh al-Anfāl). Earlier Sufis used the term to refer to a sudden flash of understanding whether it resulted from listening to poetry or prose. Later on it was used to refer to the spiritual songs. See Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 44.

Neither samāʿ nor wajd were commanded by the Qur'ān or the Sunnah. Neither the Prophet ﷺ nor the Companions practiced the former or sought the latter. However, some of the people who turned to it were reputable people of good character whose sincerity cannot be doubted. They felt their hearts melt when listening to good poetic verses sung by those who shared their feelings. Their writings are full of anecdotes describing the great power of samāʿ. At the same time they were aware of possible problems with it. They imposed many restrictions and issued many cautions to avoid these problems. Later Sufi masters, realizing that none of these precautions helped, decided to abandon it.

Thus we can discern three periods in the Sufi involvement with samāʿ. An initial period of opposition, an intermediate period of justification with severe restrictions, and finally abandonment and prohibition with the caveat that we should not criticize those who had engaged in it in the preceding period because they had complied with the restrictions even though it was no longer reasonable to expect this compliance. Whatever goes on in the name of samāʿ today is in defiance of authentic Sufi teachings, although today's proponents rely on the arguments and debates that belong to the bygone intermediate period.

FIRST PERIOD - OPPOSITION

Among the early Sufi masters Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ (d. 187 AH) said, "Ghinā' is the charm for fornication."[2] Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243 AH), another eminent Sufi master and author of many books, said: "Ghinā' is prohibited just like the meat of carrion."[3] Both of them used the term ghinā' and did not make an exception for the Sufi samāʿ. According to Ibn Taymiyyah renowned Sufi masters from the first three centuries stayed away from samāʿ. This was true in all parts of the Islamic world whether it was Ḥijāz, al-Shām, Yemen, Miṣr, Maghreb, Irāq, or Khurasān. This includes Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham (d. 161/778), Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥawārī (d. 230/844), and al-Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867). Similarly Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, a staunch critic of Sufi samāʿ as it evolved later, affirms that the original Sufi masters were never involved in those forms of music that are either prohibited or controversial.

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[2] Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Dhamm al-Malāhī*, no. 22, p. 42.

[3] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 51.

> We assert that it never happened with any of the masters of Sufism—those who combine knowledge and gnosis (*ʿilm* and *maʿrifah*)—that they were involved in listening to stringed instruments and others that are prohibited by consensus. And because of their avoidance of dubious things to the best of their ability they did the same regarding musical practices about which there is disagreement. As for those who hover around dubious things and listening out of deep desires, they have nothing from Taṣawwuf except its form and nothing from knowledge except its name. And all good and honor and nobility is in following the Prophet ﷺ.[4]

SECOND PERIOD - JUSTIFICATION WITH RESTRICTIONS

In the next stage we find Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988) defending samāʿ but distancing it from the music for fun by affirming in unequivocal terms,

> Listening to stringed instruments, wind instruments, maʿāzif, kūbah, and the drum is included in the prohibited samāʿ, for it is the samāʿ of the people following falsehood (*ahl al-bāṭil*) and it has been prohibited by the sound reports coming from the Messenger ﷺ.[5]

A number of Sufi masters repeatedly reminded that samāʿ had to be handled with great caution. Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 297 AH) said: "Samāʿ must have the time, the place and the brethren."[6] If

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4. Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم وغيره، القسم الثاني في سماع الغناء المقترن برقص أو نحو دف أو مزمار ووتر [Chapter 1: Prohibited forms of ghinā'. Type 2: Ghinā' accompanied by dance or the likes of duff, mizmār, or stringed instruments], 74.

5. Al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumaʿ*, 245.

6. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, quoted in *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, السماع [Samāʿ], 340.

these three were not available then one should not listen.[7] He also cautioned: "When you see a novice fond of samāʿ, know that there is a remnant of idleness in him."[8] In a dream he heard Shayṭān say that one occasion where he found the Sufis vulnerable was during samāʿ.[9] Al-Sarrāj said that a novice must learn the preconditions for samāʿ from the shaykhs so that "it would not turn into entertainment."[10] Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245 AH) highlighted the slippery nature of the enterprise when he said, "Samāʿ is a divine influence which stirs the heart to seek Allāh. Those that listen to it spiritually attain to Allāh, and those who listen to it sensually fall into heresy."[11] The Sufi shaykh and Mālikī scholar Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) reminded, "If any carnal passion is stirred, samāʿ is forbidden."[12]

Samāʿ had to be conducted in the gathering of the pious, brought together solely by the love of Allāh. It was like a prescription medicine that could only be used by someone under the care of a Sufi doctor. It was prohibited for the masses. Both the singer and the listener had to be sincere, devoted, experienced, and free of any

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7. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, quoted in Al-Sarrāj, *Al-Lumaʿ*, 342.

8. Al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, quoted in *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, السماع [Samāʿ], 344. Cf. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, "نقد مسالك الصوفية في السماع" [Critical view of sufi ways of samāʿ], 215.

9. Al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb Taḥrīm al-Ghinā'*, under فصل في الإحتجاج برد شيوخ الصوفية على من أباح السماع [Section: Argument using the criticism of Sufi masters on those who permit samāʿ], no. 93, 227. Cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, under فصل إنكار مشايخ الطرق السماع لمعرفتهم بآفاته وسوء تأثيره [Section: Sufi masters' rejection of samāʿ because of their knowledge of its problems and bad effects], 72.

10. Al-Sarrāj, *Al-Lumaʿ*, 253.

11. Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, quoted in al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub*, "Uncovering the eleventh veil: concerning samāʿ," 404. Cf. *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, السماع [Samāʿ], 340.

12. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, الفصل الثاني والثلاثون شرح مقامات اليقين وأحوال الموقنين ، ذكر مخاوف المحبين ومقاماتهم في الخوف [Section 32: Explanation of the stations of conviction, the states of firm believers, the fear of the lovers, and their stations in fear], 2:100.

worldly desires or goals. Here is a list of conditions for the validity of samāʿ:[13]

a. No woman or beardless young boy should be present in the gathering.
b. All those present should be pious people.
c. The singer should be sincere in seeking closeness to Allāh. His purpose should not be to get a financial reward.
d. The audience should not have gathered for free food.
e. One should not feign ecstasy.

An additional condition was that the *shaykh* or his deputy must be present to oversee the gathering. Even with all these restrictions, their reservations about the enterprise are evident in the statement of Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhbārī (d. 322/934): "We wish that we would come out of it even."[14] That is, it would not add to our virtues or sins. Similarly Junayd al-Baghdādī repented and stopped listening out of such concerns.[15]

An interesting conversation is reported between Ismāʿīl ibn Nujayd and Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Naṣra Ābādhī, which shows the tensions within the Sufi circles about samāʿ. Ibn Nujayd said to him: "I heard you are fond of samāʿ." Abū 'l-Qāsim replied: "Yes, O Shaykh. Samāʿ is better than that we should sit and backbite." Ibn Nujayd commented, "One slip in samāʿ is a greater sin than so many years of backbiting."[16]

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[13] Khayr al-Dīn al-Ramlī, *al-Fatāwā al-Khayriyyah*, (Egypt: Al-Maṭbaʿah al-Kubrā al-Mīriyyah, 1300 AH), 2:182, as quoted in Shafīʿ, *Islām awr Mūsiqī*, 272.

[14] Abū ʿAlī al-Rūdhbārī, quoted in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل بيان أن استطابة الصوفي للسماع أو عدم استطابته له ليس فيه حكم شرعي [Section: Whether or not Sufis find samāʿ agreeable is not the basis for a Sharīʿah ruling], 294. Also in *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, السماع [Samāʿ], 341.

[15] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, الرد على من احتج بحضور كبار الصوفية السماع [Refutation of those who argued on the basis of the attendance of samāʿ by senior Sufis], 80.

[16] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل إنكار مشايخ الطرق السماع لمعرفتهم بآفاته وسوء تأثيره [Section: Sufi masters' rejection of samāʿ because of their knowledge of its problems and bad effects], 71–72.

SUFI ARGUMENTS

In this intermediate phase the samāʿ debate continued with the Sufis offering legal and logical evidence in support of their practice and other scholars refuting them. The Sufi arguments were an after-the-fact affair; the Qur'ānic verses they quoted—when read without a predisposition toward samāʿ—would never lead one to the interpretations they offered. We have looked at some of these in the section for the Qur'ānic verses claimed to be showing a general permissibility of ghinā', and we have seen that the arguments are tenuous.

They also argued from aḥadīth that show some permissibility for ghinā' on Eid and in weddings and tried to extrapolate from them. As others have noted there is a big difference between these occasions and Sufi gatherings. The public announcement of a wedding is required to distinguish the ḥalāl from the ḥarām. Islām closes the door to secret marriages because they lead to the destruction of the institution of marriage itself. In Eid, a display of strength is desired. Hence the command to have one large gathering in a city and to say the *takbīrāt* loudly all the way to and from the prayer grounds, as well as the command to go to the prayer grounds using one route and return using another. None of these applies to Sufi gatherings.[17]

A third line of argument was based on a claim that spiritual exercises led Sufis to a state whereby they were not negatively influenced by music. The ruling of permissibility or prohibition would thus depend upon the individual. For example, Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq said:

> Samāʿ is prohibited to the commonality because of the remnant of carnal desires in them, permissible for the ascetics to help in their spiritual exercises, desirable for our associates for the life of their hearts.[18]

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[17] ʿĀlam, *Bawāriq al-Ismāʿ*, 23.

[18] *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, السماع، الفصل الثاني: شرح المقامات أو مدارج أرباب السلوك [Al-Samāʿ, Section 2: Explanation of stations or grades of the patrons of the Way], 340.

Abū ’l-‘Abbās al-Qurṭubī replied that the argument was false. It implied that human constitution could be altered through exercises, a claim which is negated by human nature. It was like somebody making a claim that he had developed such a capability through exercises that drinking wine did not intoxicate him and looking at beautiful women did not cause any sensation in him and therefore both should be permitted to him. By consensus, this claim would be rejected.[19]

Similarly Ibn Qayyim[20] reminded us that whatever Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ had prohibited applied equally to the masses and the elite. Allāh ﷻ never prohibited something for the masses, then permitted it for the elite, and declared it desirable for the super-elite. Otherwise someone could also claim that wine was prohibited for the commonality because of the remnant of carnal desires in them, permissible for those who were exercising self-control, and desirable for those with a living heart that did not get affected by its consumption.[21]

It was also claimed that samā‘ was food for the soul. Ibn Qayyim replied that it might be food for the *nafs*, the seat of lusts, but not the soul. Further, just as not all foods for the body are permissible, in the same way not all foods for the soul were permissible.[22] The best food for the soul is the recitation of the Qur'ān, while most samāʿ, and excessive engagement in even its permissible varieties, turn the heart away from the Qur'ān. He quoted Sayyidunā ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه as saying that if our hearts were pure we would never be satiated by the Qur'ān.

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[19] Abū ’l-‘Abbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qinā‘*, 89.

[20] Contrary to popular impression, Ibn Qayyim is not a diehard opponent of all Sufis. After quoting Imām Shāfi‘ī about the deviant Sufis to the effect that anyone who adopts their mysticism in the morning will lose all sensibility before noon, he goes on to say: “As for the Sufi masters who are people of knowledge and obedience and who follow the Qur’ān and the Sunnah, they are heirs to the prophets and leaders of the God-fearing. Their words are medicine for the heart . . . All of them urged their followers to follow the Qur’ān and Sunnah.” See Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā’*, under فصل بيان أن استطابة الصوفي للسماع أو عدم استطابته له ليس فيه حكم شرعي [Section: Whether or not Sufis find samā‘ agreeable is not the basis for a Shariah ruling], 294. Unfortunately his balanced view is ignored by many of his zealous followers today.

[21] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā’*, under فصل الرد على الإحتجاج بقول ذي النون المصري [Section: Refutation of the argument based on Dhū ’l-Nūn al-Miṣrī’s statement], 253.

[22] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā’*, under فصل الرد على الإحتجاج بأن

Arguments aside, while some of the samāʿ, with the extreme restrictions imposed by the Sufi masters, may have been within the limits of allowability, it was a slippery stone. It was difficult to stay firm on it for long without slipping. The love for the Divine, when nurtured with song and dance (justified as an outward expression of wajd) silently morphed into the not-so-divine love. As Allama Syed Sulaiman Nadvi (d. 1373/1953) used to say, "The *nabīdh* (date drink produced by leaving a date-water solution overnight) of Irāq became wine in Syria." It also attracted people who were interested in the latter and found the former as a useful camouflage. The deviant Sufis, who gave a bad name to Sufism, are as much a part of our history as the true Sufis are. They were also larger in numbers. No wonder Hujwīrī said he met many people who thought that Sufism only meant music and dance.[23]

An interesting incident suggests that some of them were there even at the time of Imām Mālik. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ quotes al-Musayyibī, a contemporary of Imām Mālik, reporting in *Tartīb al-Madārik*.

> We were with Imām Mālik and his companions, when a man from Naṣībīn said, "There are some people in our land who are called Sufis. They eat a lot, then they start singing songs, then they stand and start dancing." Imām Mālik asked, "Are they young children?" The man said no. Imām Mālik asked, "Are they madmen?" The man said, "No, they are old, respected, wise men." Imām Mālik said, "I never heard of any Muslim doing

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السماع ألطف غذاء للروح فكيف يمنع منه [Section: Refutation of the argument that samāʿ is the best food for the soul so how can it be prohibited], 275.

[23] Al-Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub*, "Uncovering the eleventh veil: concerning samāʿ," 416. Such ignorant people continue to thrive today. A BBC report on Mawlānā Jalāluddīn Rumī alleged, "The Taleban attempted to crush Sufism and outlawed all music." (Charles Haviland, "The Roar of Rumi - 800 Years On," BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7016090.stm, accessed on 1 October 2007).

> such a thing." The man said, "They eat, then they stand and dance, and some slap their heads, whereas others slap their faces." Imām Mālik laughed, and then he stood up and entered his house.
>
> Imām Mālik's companions said to the man, "You have been a bad omen for our companion [i.e. Imām Mālik]. We have sat with him for more than thirty years and we never saw him laugh until today."[24]

What Imām Mālik dismissed with a rare laughter, later scholars had to take notice of. The slip is evident in the account of Imām Qurṭubī, who said:

> There is no disagreement on the prohibition of what the Sufis have started by way of singing with musical instruments. Many of them started doing crazy actions and thought they were engaged in piety.[25]

Prominent Sufi master and founder of the Suhrawardiyyah order Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) declared it a gateway for seduction:

> We have already discussed the case where samā is permissible and appropriate for the true seekers. However it has become a gateway for seduction (*fitnah*) and has lost its safeguards. People whose spiritual deeds have diminished and states have corrupted have turned to it and comprise the majority of the samāʿ gathering . . . this way time is wasted, interest in worship decreases, and interest in such gatherings increases where one seeks the fulfillment of lusts and desires for entertainment. It is no secret that such gatherings are inadmissible according to the true Sufis.[26]

Regarding the deviant cults that presented themselves as Sufis, Imām Ibn Baṭṭah, a prominent Ḥanbalī scholar wrote,

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[24] Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, *Tartīb al-Madārik*, 1:180.

[25] Quoted in Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, أبواب العيدين، باب الحراب والدرق يوم العيد [The Two Eids: Chapter: Spears and shields on Eid day], 2:513.

[26] Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, في القول في السماع ردا وانكارا [Chapter 23: Rejection of samāʿ], in al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā'*, 5:113.

> A questioner asked me about listening to this thing they called "*qawl*" which in reality is ghinā'. He asked about sitting in their gathering. So I forbade him and told him that it was what the Qur'ān had outlawed, Sunnah had forbidden, the ʿulamā had criticized, and the wise had shunned, while the vulgar and silly people had praised.[27]

Then he went on to describe the group that attended it, praised it, and invited their followers to it, while calling anyone who opposed them as ignorant. They had impressed the questioner as being very pious and knowledgeable. The group turned out to be the Jabariyyah, a deviant sect that believed that Allāh forces people to commit sins. They were ignorant people of low morals who operated under a facade of mysticism and piety. They listened to singing by young boys and women, got excited while doing that, started to dance, and claimed all of this was because of their extreme love for Allāh. They even claimed to be seeing Allāh.

Perhaps we can say about the Sufi samāʿ what the Qur'ān said about the monasticism practiced by the Christians in an earlier era.

> وَرَهۡبَانِيَّةً ٱبۡتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبۡنَٰهَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ إِلَّا ٱبۡتِغَآءَ رِضۡوَٰنِ ٱللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوۡهَا
> حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَاۖ
>
> But monasticism they invented. We ordained it not for them. (We ordained) Only seeking Allāh's pleasure, and they observed it not with right observance.[28]

The samāʿ was also not required but was started with good intentions. And with great caution. But it was a slippery stone.

THIRD PERIOD - ABANDONMENT

Eventually many of them discovered the problems that arose even with all their cautions and abandoned the practice. Thus we find that Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī (1014/1606) categorically stated that the use of duff, shabbābah, dance, and clapping done by some Sufis in his time was a great evil and everyone was responsible for righting this wrong with his hands or tongue, to the extent of his ability.[29]

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[27] Imām Ibn Baṭṭah, quoted in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل قد أكمل الله تعالى الدين ولم يجعل فيه هذا السماع [Section: Allah perfected the religion and did not include in it this samāʿ,] 70.

[28] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Ḥadīd 57:27.

After him we find Shaykh ʿAlī al-Nūrī (d. 1118/1706), a Sufi and a graduate of al-Azhar, rejecting the idea that one could gain closeness to Allāh by playing musical instruments. He said in his *Risālah fī Ḥukm al-Samāʿ*:

> Allāh's remembrance should be from the bottom of one's heart, not from playing an instrument of diversion . . . It is not hidden from any wise person who pages through the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and the accounts of the pious elders, and the statements of earlier and later scholars, that playing instruments is being rude to Allāh and it is not possible to gain nearness to Him through it.

He moved on to describe the true Sufi path for gaining closeness to Allāh:

> What brings us closer to Allāh is His fear, keeping our limbs busy in His worship like ṣalāh and fasting, abandoning transgression, suppressing desires by minimizing food and drink to the extent possible, keeping quiet except when saying good words, reducing contact with the people to the level necessary, and other virtuous qualities like these.

While this was a negation of the very basis of Sufi samāʿ, the spiritual and moral deterioration in the people obtaining in his time was certainly an important consideration in his discussion:

> In the person who is overwhelmed by the love of this world, and who is infatuated by its lustful attractions and joys, and whose heart is polluted with many sins, in him samāʿ only excites the evils dominant in his heart. It is not hidden from any fair-minded person, as to what conditions—regarding the corruption of deeds and change in our states—we are in, in these times. **God forbid that any just person should declare permissibility of musical instruments in our times, whether it is *bandīr* or**

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[29] Mullā ʿAli al-Qārī, *al-Samāʿ*, 122.

> **something else, except those for which the Sharīʿah has made an exception for special occasions.** (Emphasis added).[30]

Previously he mentioned that only duff was permitted during weddings, although its permissibility for men was controversial.

Similarly prominent Ḥanafī jurist Shaykh Aḥmad, also known as Mullā Jīwan (d. 1130/1718), gave a clear verdict of prohibition for the Sufi samāʿ because of the deterioration it had suffered:

> In our times, people arrange samāʿ gatherings whereby they consume alcohol, engage in obscene acts, and listen to singers and musicians. There is not the slightest doubt that this is a major sin and to consider it permissible is tantamount to unbelief . . .
>
> Therefore, in our times, we should not give a fatwa of permissibility even for those who may be qualified to listen to samāʿ (because of their piety, fear of Allāh, and purity of intentions). For everyone these days claims that he is qualified, while Junayd al-Baghdādī had repented from samāʿ despite his being on the highest station of gnosis (*maʿrifah*) and fear of Allāh.[31]

Nearly two centuries later Imdādullāh Muhājir Makkī (d. 1317/1899), a major Sufi master in the Indian subcontinent, ended the Sufi justification for samāʿ by reiterating that it was dangerous for the novice and unnecessary for the master.[32]

There are certain facts that should be kept in mind regarding the samāʿ debate. First, the Sufi arguments, when presented as evidence for the general permissibility of music and singing, are weak and have been decidedly rejected by scholars. We will look at some more of these below. Second, contrary to the impression of general permissibility of music generated by their arguments, what they actually advocated regarding samāʿ was a limited activity with severe restrictions and reservations. Third, even if each single one of the Sufis agreed to the permissibility of samāʿ, it would be of little legal consequence since statements of Sufis are not a proof for legal rulings. Most Sufis were not *mujtahids* i.e. those capable of doing independent reasoning for religious rulings.[33] This point is often overlooked by those who drop Sufi names as justification for music. Fourth, they never reached such a hypothetical consensus at anytime anyway. In fact, the majority of them ultimately declared it wrong and ordered their followers to stay away.[34]

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[30] ʿAlī al-Nūrī, *Risālah*, 17.

[31] Shaykh Aḥmad (Mullā Jīwan), *Al-Tafsīrāt al-Aḥmadiyyah*, quoted in Shafīʿ, *Islām awr Mūsīqī*, 358.

[32] Shafīʿ, *Islām awr Mūsīqī*, 326.

To further understand the Sufi perspective on samāʿ and see how it is being misused today, we look at the views of Imām Ghazālī, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, and ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī.

Imām Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

Imām Ghazālī discovered Sufism in his historic journey that he has documented in his *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl* (Deliverance from Error). He left his prestigious job as the principal of the Niẓāmiyyah, the most respected Islāmic educational institution of the time, due to his internal turmoil about what was the right path and what was the best group with whom to undertake the journey of life. He got the answer to the first question in a couple of months of reflection when his heart settled on only Islām offering the straight path. The light came to his heart through much praying. Then he took many years looking at the various Islāmic groups and choosing the right one. After examining and being disappointed by other groups he turned to the Sufis. He had learned that:

> The aim of their knowledge is to lop off the obstacles present in the soul and to rid oneself of its reprehensible habits and vicious qualities in order to attain thereby a heart empty of all save Allāh and adorned with the constant remembrance of Allāh.[35]

After ten years he concluded:

> I knew with certainty that the Sufis are those who uniquely follow the way to Allāh Most High, their mode of life is the

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[33] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, الرد على من احتج بحضور كبار الصوفية السماع [Refutation of those who argued on the basis of the attendance of samāʿ by senior Sufis], 80.

[34] Ibid., 81.

[35] McCarthy, trans., *Deliverance from Error*, 77.

> best of all, their way the most direct of ways, and their ethic the purest.[36]

His magnum opus *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* was written in those days. Through it al-Ghazālī gave Sufism respectability and clarified many of the misconceptions about it. *Iḥyā'* is an indispensable work for anyone interested in learning about self-reform, purification of the heart, and all the beautiful teachings of Sufism. However, the fifty-nine pages he devoted to samā' in this four-volume work do not necessarily reflect its best. We can get a sense of the power of *Iḥyā'* by noting that a critic like Ibn al-Jawzī produced an abridged version of the book,[37] though he did remove the section on samā' from this abridgment.

Al-Ghazālī surveyed the existing opinions about samā' and noted that all jurists, including Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Imām Mālik, and Imām Shafi'ī declared it prohibited while some Sufis supported it. He used the word samā' interchangeably with ghinā' as all these imams used the word ghinā' in declaring its prohibition. Then he gave his arguments for permissibility of samā', followed by a list of conditions that, when violated, would annul this permissibility. Interestingly, most people who refer to his arguments seem to forget his conditions. For example few realize that al-Ghazālī declared samā' to be impermissible for the youth, the target audience for most music business today. This distorted perception of al-Ghazālī's stand has done much damage. While reporting on the prevalence of music in Egypt, Danielson notes with apparent glee:

> Conservative abhorrence of music has for centuries been confronted with al-Ghazālī's defense of music as an avenue to God. Al-Ghazālī's stature as a theologian and spiritual leader balances conservative disapprobation and renders musical performance a perennially contested terrain.[38]

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[36] Ibid., 81.

[37] The abridged adaptation was called *Minhāj al-Qāṣidīn*. Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī produced a further abridged version, called *Mukhtaṣar Minhāj al-Qāṣidīn*.

[38] Danielson, "New Nightingales of the Nile," 300.

In other words music fans have found in al-Ghazālī a convenient prop on which to hang the justification for their indulgence. But this is an exploitation of al-Ghazālī. Anyone who wants to seriously understand the issue must not separate al-Ghazālī's conditions from his arguments. When that is done those invoking al-Ghazālī in support of their license may be in for a rude shock. Al-Ghazālī does use words like ḥarām and makrūh for activities and conditions that describe most of what is going on today even in the nashīd department, let alone the secular music. Below we look at al-Ghazālī's arguments followed by his conditions.

ARGUMENTS

Before giving his own opinion, al-Ghazālī quotes an argument from Ibn Jurayj that samāʿ is only *laghw* and therefore harmless. The argument invokes the verse:

لَّا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ بِٱللَّغْوِ فِيٓ أَيْمَٰنِكُمْ وَلَٰكِن يُؤَاخِذُكُم بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢٥﴾

> Allāh will not take you to task for that which is *laghw* (unintentional and ineffectual) in your oaths. But He will take you to task for that which your hearts have garnered. Allāh is Forgiving, Clement.[39]

The verse refers to unintentional or careless words of oath that people utter but do not mean; extending it to everything *laghw* is really stretching it. For the Qur'ān clearly states at other places, while describing the qualities of true believers, that they stay away from *laghw*:

وَٱلَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ ٱللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾

> and who keep themselves away from *laghw* (frivolities and vanities).[40]

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[39] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Baqarah 2:225.

[40] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Mu'minūn 23:3.

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا۟ ٱللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ

And when they hear *laghw* they withdraw from it.[41]

Interestingly the claim that it is only *laghw*, destroys another argument put forward by al-Ghazālī, namely that those in paradise will be listening to music so it must be permissible here.[42] This is because the Qur'ān is categorical that those in paradise will not listen to *laghw*.

لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلَٰمًا

They will not there hear any *laghw*, but only salutations of Peace.[43]

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْثِيمًا

No *laghw* will they hear there, nor any call to sin.[44]

لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا كِذَّٰبًا

No *laghw* will they hear in that [Paradise], nor any lie.[45]

So contrary to the argument of Ibn Jurayj, believers are asked to stay away from *laghw* in this world and assured that they will be safe from having to listen to it in Paradise.

Al-Ghazālī then begins his arguments by suggesting that samāʿ is a combination of pleasant sounds, rhythm, and understandable words that move the heart. He asks: "When none of the individual components is prohibited, how can the combination be?"[46] This argument itself is without merit. A combination is often greater than the sum of its parts. Grape juice and heat are permissible separately but their combination produces wine. As Ibn al-Jawzī points out, by themselves wood and strings are permissible products but the ʿūd made from them is not.

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[41] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Qaṣaṣ 28:55.

[42] See the discussion of this argument in chapter 5.

[43] *Al-Qur'ān*, Maryam 19:62.

[44] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Wāqiʿah 56:25.

[45] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Naba' 78:35.

[46] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, كتاب آداب السماع والوجد، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of Samāʿ and Wajd, Chapter: 1, Differences of scholars on permissibility of samāʿ and exposure of truth regarding it], 2:365.

Here, though, the claim of a general permissibility of individual components itself is invalid. Not all pleasant sounds, not all rhythms, and not all understandable words automatically fall in the category of the permissible. To demonstrate the permissibility of pleasant sounds al-Ghazālī reminds us that for every sensory perception there are things that make us feel good and others that make us feel bad. For example, "The pleasure of the eye is in looking at greenery, flowing water, a beautiful face, and pleasing colors." Similarly good sounds please us while bad sounds like the braying of the donkey displease us.

The problem with this argument is contained within the example he quoted, for it is not permissible to look at every beautiful face. Similarly it is not permissible to listen to every beautiful sound. Pleasurable does not automatically mean permissible. Most sins, after all, are "pleasurable."

Al-Ghazālī derives the permissibility of the second component (rhythm) from the chirping of birds, which, according to him, is the original source of rhythm. In response to this Ibn Qayyim asks: What is the comparison between the chirping of birds and the singing by beautiful songstresses using musical instruments. Do they excite the same emotions and produce the same lusts?[47] While al-Ghazālī never advocated the permissibility of singing by beautiful songstresses using musical instruments, the point is that singing by birds is not in the same class as singing and music playing by humans, and therefore the analogical argument is not valid.

Despite his sweeping logic that musical instruments should be permissible because they are patterned after the vocal cords of birds, al-Ghazālī does declare malāhī, awtār, and mazāmīr as prohibited because of their close association with wine drinking. Similarly he says kūbah is prohibited because of its use by the mukhannaths. He permits duff, shabbābah, and *shāhīn*.

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[47] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, منزلة السماع، أنواع السماع [The Station of samāʿ. Types of samāʿ], 349.

The issue of imitation of the *fāsiqs* (those given to a lifestyle of sinfulness) cited here is important. Even otherwise permissible things will be declared prohibited if such imitation is detected. For example he says that if some people arrange a wine drinking party with all its paraphernalia (the bartender, the cups, the sitting arrangement, and the mannerism) but substitute lemonade for wine, the party will still remain prohibited.[48] This condition alone is sufficient to declare most music today as prohibited. If we were to remove every instrument, tune, and mannerism of *fāsiqs* not much will remain in the popular music section of the Muslim world today.

Regarding the moving power of samāʿ he lists several cases with which no one will have a problem like the singing of pilgrims to excite love for ḥajj, rajaz for the battlefield, and singing on Eid and weddings. Included in the list are love songs, which are permissible when the object of love in the song is one's spouse.[49] Needless to say, it is difficult to imagine how this can be translated into a concert.

Imām Ghazālī was a very great scholar who dealt a serious blow to deviant sects like Muʿtazilīs as well as the philosophers. The Ummah remains indebted to him. But ultimately he was a human being; genius but not infallible. He is great, not because of his arguments on samāʿ, but despite them. The section on samāʿ is not the strongest part of the *Iḥyā'*. That is why other scholars embraced the *Iḥyā'* but took exception to his arguments for samāʿ. Ultimately the Ummah is grander than its greatest scholars.

RESTRICTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Fortunately, the restrictions that Imām Ghazālī places on samāʿ reduce the possibility of its misuse. His conditions come in the section where he discusses the five cases that are cause for the prohibition of samāʿ. These are related to problems with the singer, the instruments, the text, and the listener.

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[48] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, كتاب آداب السماع والوجد ، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of Samāʿ and Wajd, Chapter: 1, Differences of scholars on permissibility of samāʿ and exposure of truth regarding it], 2:365.

[49] Ibid., 2:374.

1. It is not permissible to listen to a *non-maḥram* woman. The same applies to a beardless boy. The reason in both cases is that it may excite lust.

2. All instruments associated with wine drinkers, fāsiqs, and mukhannaths (who were professional singers) are prohibited. This includes wind and stringed instruments as well as drums. On the other hand, duff, qaḍīb, and shabbābah are permissible.

3. Songs that contain obscenity, lewdness, satire, or lies about Allāh ﷻ, His Messenger ﷺ, and the Companions ﵃ are prohibited. A song describing the beauty of a woman is also prohibited.

4. There is a problem with the listener "when he is young because then lust is predominant in him." Al-Ghazālī explains:

> There is a constant war going on in the heart between the forces of Shayṭān i.e. lust, and the Party of Allāh, i.e. the light of intellect . . . Most hearts today [i.e. in al-Ghazālī's time] have been conquered by the forces of Shayṭān . . . For such a person, samāʿ is equivalent to sharpening the swords of Shayṭān. He must leave the samāʿ gathering because it will only hurt him.[50]

He emphasizes this point again in the section on the etiquettes for samāʿ. He mentions the despicable state found in the youth and people overwhelmed by lusts, who apply what they listen to the objects of their lust. "This is not worth talking about except to discuss its baseness and to declare its prohibition," he notes.[51]

5. When the listener is in a neutral state whereby neither love of Allāh (which would be helped by samāʿ) nor lust (which would make samāʿ prohibited) are predominant in him, it is permissible for him to listen. "However excessive indulgence in samāʿ will turn him into an impudent person whose testimony is to be rejected. Just as minor sins turn into major ones due to persistence, similarly

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[50] Ibid., 2:379.

[51] Ibid., كتاب آداب السماع والوجد ، الباب الثاني آثار السماع وآدابه [Book: Etiquettes of Samāʿ and Wajd, Chapter: 2, The effects and etiquettes of samāʿ], 2:385.

some permissible acts turn into sins through excessive involvement in them."[52] As he explains, a small mole adds to the beauty of the face but too many moles destroy it. Similarly a little bit of amusement is good but too much of it is ugly and prohibited.

Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126)

Abū 'l-Fatḥ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 520/1126) was a Sufi and the younger brother of the famous Imām Ghazālī. Although Imām Ghazālī handed the charge of the Niẓāmiyyah to him when he left on his own journey of finding the truth, Aḥmad al-Ghazālī was devoted to Sufism and led a secluded life. His *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ fī 'l-Radd ʿalā man Yuḥarrim al-Samāʿ bi 'l-Ijmāʿ* (Lightning Flashes to Refute the One Who Declares Consensus on Prohibition of Samāʿ) is an independent work, different from the *Iḥya'* in its arguments in the defense of samāʿ.

This is probably, as the title suggests, the most strong-worded of all the books written for this purpose. His book was published by James Robson from manuscripts in 1938. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī describes the Sufi view of samāʿ as a means of acquiring the state of ecstasy and describes the conditions required for its success. He then presents evidence from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth in defense of this samāʿ. This is followed by directions on conducting a samāʿ gathering, including recommended Qur'ānic verses and the poems that should be recited.

He begins the book by explaining why he wrote it:

> Some pious people who turn to Allāh in joy and sorrow asked me to write, especially for them and generally for the seekers, an epistle on samāʿ describing its benefits, conditions necessary for those benefits to be realized, and necessary cautions as dictated by the Sharīʿah.[53]

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[52] Ibid., كتاب آداب السماع والوجد ، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of Samāʿ and Wajd, Chapter: 1, Differences of scholars on permissibility of samāʿ and exposure of truth regarding it], 2:379.

[53] Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ*. In Robson, *Tracts on Listening to Music*, 120.

The samāʿ he is defending "consists of witnessing strange secrets in the delicate (*raqīqah*) poems that the Sufi singer (*qawwāl*) recites." This witnessing is accompanied by ecstasy which arises in the heart of the practicing gnostic and his perfect follower.[54]

This samāʿ does require "time, place, and brethren." His description of the brethren excludes common Muslims, who are the brothers in faith. It is not permissible for the Sufi to associate with them except briefly to benefit them. Brothers in love are those who help the Sufis with their wealth and persons. But the real brethren are those of ecstasies, gnosis, and taste. Samāʿ is to be enjoyed in their company.[55]

STRONG WORDS

He argues from the aḥadīth of al-Rubayyiʿ bint Muʿawwidh and Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah ؓ that show limited permissibility in weddings and on Eid as well as the verse of Sūrah al-Zumar (39:18). We have already discussed these in the sections on Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. This is the standard Sufi argument that extrapolates from these texts that show limited permissibility. Using these, he makes such strong-worded statements as "anyone who says that samāʿ is absolutely forbidden must acknowledge that the Prophet ﷺ did what is forbidden, looked at what is forbidden, and approved in others what is forbidden. If that flutters in anyone's mind then he is an infidel by consensus."[56]

He is of course referring to the permissible forms of samāʿ like the permissible singing on Eid, over which there is no disagreement anyway. However excited by these apparently strong words, James Robson chose to juxtapose *Dhamm al-Malāhī* with *Bawāriq* in his *Tracts on Listening to Music* to underscore the unbridgeable chasm between the opponents and proponents of music. Yet, a closer examination will show that the gap is much smaller than what appears at first sight; the book that in Robson's estimate is a counterweight to *Dhamm al-Malāhī* (condemnation of malāhī) also condemns malāhī.

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[54] Ibid., 121–22.

[55] Ibid., 123.

[56] Ibid., 120–21.

RESTRICTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Despite those lightening flashes, *Bawāriq* amazingly agrees with the proponents of prohibition in important details. We have already seen that *Bawāriq* does not recommend samāʿ for everyone. It is only meant for the "true brethren." So it remains prohibited for the masses. But even for the brethren there are severe restrictions. For example, most musical instruments are prohibited. Aḥmad al-Ghazālī writes:

> As for the malāhī (instruments of diversion), they are all forbidden by common consent, such as the *jank* (harp), *rabāb* (viol), ʿūd (lute), *barbaṭ* (the Persian lute), mizmār (the reed-pipe) and the like, with the exception of duff, for the sound traditions about the permissibility of listening to the duff are reported in Bukhārī and Muslim.[57]

He affirms that there is no disagreement on this prohibition of musical instruments.

> Should Abū Ḥanīfah's statement prohibiting samāʿ be established it would be interpreted as listening to malāhī, depravity, licentiousness, and falsehood and there is no disagreement on the prohibition of that.[58]

He also accepts the ḥadīth of Nāfiʿ about the shepherd's flute. He writes:

> But as for the flute, it is forbidden to listen to it, on account of what has come down in the ḥadīth that the Messenger ﷺ heard the sound of the flute and plugged his ears.[59]

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[57] Ibid., 175.
[58] Ibid., 146.
[59] Ibid., 154–55.

There are also restrictions on who attends the ceremony. Women are not only not allowed, they cannot even be looking at the ceremony through a window:

> The condition of their assembling is that no beardless youth should be among them, nor should there be a window through which women can look at them; but if pious beardless youths are among them, they sit behind the men.[60]

In these restrictions there is acknowledgment of the potential dangers of even the Sufi samāʿ. Needless to say his book is of no help to those who conduct the so-called Sufi samāʿ at the tombs of saints, let alone those who justify the music heard in the Muslim world today.

ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī (d. 1141/1729)

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī was a Ḥanafī jurist and a Sufi master ordained in the Qādiriyyah and Naqshbandiyyah *ṭarīqahs.* He wrote *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt fī Samāʿ al-Ālāt* (Explaining the arguments for listening to instruments) in 1088/1677. He has been rebuked for his view on samāʿ by prominent Ḥanafī scholar Shaykh Ālūsī in his *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī.*

He begins his book by praising Allāh "Who made samāʿ of (i.e. listening to) truth obligatory on everyone and samāʿ of falsehood prohibited for them."[61] He then explains that his companions had asked him to write this book.

> So I wrote this epistle for the fair minded people from the brothers to point to what is true and correct in this matter and to free my companions from the predicament (that they had been put in) by the ignorant.[62]

It seems that they were under attack by the *fuqahāʾ* for some of their questionable Sufi practices. He is complaining about the masses who do not understand the fine points of fiqh and believe the majority of fuqahā' who also lack understanding. He stresses the point that one does not become a muftī by memorizing a few rulings. One has to develop a deep understanding of the subject.

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[60] Ibid., 175.

[61] Al-Nābulsī, *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 2.

[62] Ibid., 2–3.

However in the book he acknowledges the presence of errant Sufis and distances himself from them.

> There are people who appear in their garb and who copy their mannerisms but are outside the path of the Sufis and are a disgrace for them, just like there are ignorant people who appear in the garb of jurists and talk like them and are a disgrace for them. Just as the jurists are not attacked because of such people so the Sufis should not be either.[63]

Thus the book had been written to make the case for the samā' of the true Sufis. Like the work of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī,[64] it had been written to defend. Therefore it uses arguments that, taken out of context, may seem to be a general endorsement of music. Thus, his statements of justification have to be read with other quotes he provides as well as the conclusions he reaches. He quotes from *Kanz al-Daqā'iq* the discussion of the issue of attending a *walīmah* (wedding feast) where there is amusement and singing:

> Whoever is invited to a *walīmah* where there is amusement and singing he can sit and eat if the singing and amusement are not at the dinner table (*mā'idah*) and the person in question is an obscure person whose sitting will not cause harm. But if the singing is at the dinner table then it is not appropriate to sit. And if the person is one whom others follow then it is not appropriate for him to sit there but he must leave . . . This is when he did not know about this beforehand. But if he did know then it is appropriate that he should not go there.[65]

In this discussion one can see the tension between two opposing goals. One is to keep the wedding ceremony a well-attended public event to eliminate the possibility of secret marriages. The other is to keep the ceremony free of undesirable activities and discourage people from attending it when that happens. Obviously the amusement mentioned here is what exceeds the permissible singing at the weddings. Al-Nābulsī is completely in agreement that such singing has to be avoided and discouraged.

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[63] Ibid., 31.

[64] Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, *Bawāriq al-Ilmā' fī Takfīr man Ḥarrama 'l-Samā'*.

[65] Abū 'l-Barakāt 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Nasafī, *Kanz al-Daqā'iq*, quoted in al-Nābulsī, *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 10.

He also quotes approvingly the comments of Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Effendī al-ʿImādī, the Ḥanafī muftī from Damascus, who said:

> [Samāʿ] has been declared ḥarām by the one who cannot be criticized because of the truth of his statement. And it has been declared mubāḥ by the one who cannot be criticized because of the strength of his spiritual state. So anyone who finds in his heart the light of gnosis (maʿrifah) he should go ahead for it. And if not, then stopping at the limit declared by the Sharīʿah is safer.[66]

In other words samāʿ is prohibited but an exception can be made for the accomplished ascetic who will derive spiritual benefits and no harm from it. With a plea for this limited permissibility of samāʿ any permissibility for ghinā' is obviously out of the question. Al-Nābulsī also quotes from *al-Fatāwā al-Bazzāziyyah*:

> Listening to musical instruments (malāhī) like beating with a stick (qaḍīb), etc is ḥarām. The Messenger ﷺ said: "listening to malāhī is sin, sitting for it is transgression, and enjoying it is ***kufr*** (ingratitude)" because putting our organs to the uses for which they were not created is ingratitude. So it is obligatory, totally obligatory, that one should refrain from such listening as it was reported from the Messenger ﷺ that he put his fingers in his ears when he heard such sounds.[67]

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[66] Al-Nābulsī, *ʿĪḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 23.

[67] Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Shihāb al-Bazzāzī (d. 827/1424), *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Wajīz (al-Fatāwā al-Bazzāziyyah)*, quoted in al-Nābulsī, *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 10.

Regarding the statement that enjoying it is *kufr*, which may mean both ingratitude and apostasy, he says, "It has been said that *kufr* (apostasy) refers to believing it to be permissible."[68]

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī does not question any of these reports. Rather he argues that all of them are qualified by the word lahw (diversion). The prohibition does not apply to duff or ṭunbūr or qaḍīb specifically, but to *lahw*; the act is ḥarām when it is *lahw*, and not otherwise.[69] As for those traditions and juristic texts that do not use this word but declare a prohibition of ghinā', and maʿāzif, etc, he argues that their intent is made clear by other traditions and juristic texts that do. *Lahw* is just implied in the former.

ARGUMENTS

In an effort to make the case for a general permission, he does use some weak arguments like the ones we saw earlier. Further, he drastically restricts *lahw* to things that divert us from mandatory acts of obedience leading to the conclusion that listening to instruments outside of prayer times is not *lahw*.[70] This watering down of the definition of *lahw*, which sounds more like Ibn Ḥazm, could effectively nullify the concerns he quoted from the authorities. If we are only concerned about the prayer times, then that is no concern at all as at the time of a prescribed act of worship even other acts of worship are prohibited. However as we shall see later, his final conclusions do not match this logic.

He also repeats the claim made by al-Ghazālī that the sound of musical instruments is like the chirping of birds. Both are sounds that people enjoy. Since listening to the latter is permissible by consensus, so should the former.[71] As mentioned earlier, the answer is that they do not excite one in the same way. The thoughts of sins that he cautions us against entertaining while listening to samāʿ (mentioned below) do not occur while listening to the chirping of birds.

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[68] Al-Nābulsī, *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 12.

[69] Ibid., 11.

[70] Ibid., 13.

[71] Ibid., 25.

He also argues that rulings of fiqh do depend on intentions. For example, reciting certain verses is permissible for a person in a state of major ritual impurity if his or her intention is to recite them as *dhikr*. He argues that the permissibility or prohibition of samāʿ would then also depend on a person's intentions. One should note, however, that the ruling about the verses is limited to some verses of the Qur'ān that do have a legitimate use as a duʿā as well. Not every verse of the Qur'ān can be recited in a state of major ritual impurity with the intention of *dhikr*. The reason is that when an act can have multiple interpretations, then our intentions determine which interpretation is applicable. For example there is no difference in the outer form of the sunnah and farḍ Fajr ṣalāhs, or nafl and farḍ (qaḍā') fasts. Since two possibilities exist, intentions determine which one is applicable. But when this is not the case then one's intentions cannot create a new possibility. Thus one's intentions cannot convert a farḍ Maghrib ṣalāh into a sunnah ṣalāh. In the example cited by Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī the possibility of a permissible act existed a priori; our intention simply confirmed it. It did not create that possibility. As a rule in Islāmic law a prohibited act does not become permissible through good intentions.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī also argues from the title of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī's book *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*: "If they had only reflected on the title of this book, may Allāh's mercy be on him, it would have sufficed them. The title is 'Kaff al-Raʿāʿ' (Stopping the Riffraff), for samāʿ is not prohibited except for the riffraff from the people." However the full title of the book is "Stopping the Riffraff from the Prohibited in Amusement and Samāʿ." The key word is *Muḥarramāt* (prohibited). As the book shows in great detail the prohibition applies to the category of amusements and not just a particular group of people. Ibn Ḥajar uses the term *raʿāʿ* (riffraff) to indicate the type of people who are tempted by it; he never implies that the samāʿ is permissible for the elite.

RESTRICTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

However, just like Imām Ghazālī, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī's conclusions are nowhere as broad as his arguments might suggest. He puts samāʿ in three categories and it remains prohibited for the majority of people including the youth:

> We say that samāʿ falls in three categories. First is *ḥarām*. And this is for the majority of people from the youth and all those on whom their desires and pursuit of pleasure have taken hold, the love of this world controls them, and whose inner selves have been muddied and their goals have been corrupted. Samāʿ does not excite in them except the base qualities that are dominant in them and in their hearts. *(This is) especially (true) in our times with the corruption of our states and our deeds.* [Emphasis added]. The second category is *mubāḥ* (permitted). It is for the one whose only share in it is the pleasure of listening to a good voice (i.e. with none of the ill effects), who seeks joy and reduction of his grief on the absence or death of someone. The third category is *mandūb* (recommended). It is for the person who has been overwhelmed by the love of Allāh. Samāʿ excites only the desirable attributes in him and increases his desire for Allāh. This is the samāʿ of the Sufis, the people of truth and sincerity.[72]

It is interesting that his conclusion is nearly a verbatim copy of the one reached by Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī.[73]

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī further points out that when samāʿ is permissible, it is not so without conditions. When accompanied by precursors to sins like looking with desire at other women, or even a desire for it in the imagination of the audience, then samāʿ is prohibited. This is because everything that leads to ḥarām is itself ḥarām. Samāʿ is permissible in a sin-free gathering where the listener has virtuous goals, pious intentions, and a clean soul, and he is capable of protecting his thoughts from wandering into anything prohibited by Allāh.[74] He then raises the question why purity of one's thoughts should be a condition for permission when thoughts of committing a sin are not in themselves a sin. The answer is that when such thoughts are in one's mind then samāʿ will ignite the fire of desires, which will lead either to the committing of those sins or the nurturing of one's hopes and wishes for them. At a minimum it will tarnish his inner purity.

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[72] Ibid., 31.

[73] See appendix 2: "The Music Debate in History."

[74] Al-Nābulsī, *Īḍāḥ al-Dalālāt*, 49–50.

Elsewhere he approvingly quotes the conditions for the permissibility of samāʿ from Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn al-Khuḍayrī al-Dimashqī: "If it is free from all prohibited things and safe from all suspicions and is not made a habit of during most of the time . . ."[75] Here is another important restriction imposed on listening to singing: Even when it otherwise meets all the requirements for being declared permissible, one must not engage in it excessively.

We find this same condition imposed by others who argued for permissibility. There was a natural limit to this excess when singing had to be done live, in person. But even then, the reminder was there. Now with the invention of machines that can store and reproduce sound, that natural limit has been removed. Machines can be playing all the time and can be carried to all places. Obviously, in the age of the media, that restriction takes on a whole new meaning and urgency.

It is worth noting that just like Imām Ghazālī and Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī has declared samāʿ as ḥarām in no uncertain terms for the majority of the people, including the youth. There is also a clear acknowledgement of the moral and spiritual deterioration that took place over the centuries, and which is a major factor in declaring samāʿ as off limits to the majority of the people in his time. It does not take much to visualize what his reaction would be to the state of people as well as of music in our times. It is hard to imagine Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī enjoying or approving any of the Muslim concerts, whose organizers may be invoking his comments as a justification for their enterprise.

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[75] Ibid., 62.

A SUFI PLEDGE

We end this survey of Sufi positions with a quote from prominent Sufi master Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī (d. 973/1565) from his book of Sufi pledges:

> (We were required to pledge) that we will not let our friends listen to the musical instruments and to singing by young men and women . . .
>
> As for what has been narrated about some Sufis listening to stringed instruments, etc, that was only done in a state of rapture (*ghalba-e-ḥāl*) and as medicine as is done in hospitals for demented people . . . It is sufficient in this regard for an observant Muslim to know that the four schools of fiqh mostly suggest their prohibition.[76]

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[76] ʿUthmānī, trans., *Ham Say ʿAhd Liyā Giyā*, pledge 141, p. 322.

CHAPTER 9

THE CASE FOR *MALĀHĪ*

WHILE THE SUFIS WERE INTERESTED IN USING SONGS to nurture love for Allāh, some in the now-defunct Ẓāhirī (literalist) school were interested in entertainment. Two of its leaders, Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, tried to make a strong case for malāhī and ghinā'. Theirs was an extreme case as affirmed by ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī who writes: "Despite their differences no imām or scholar granted unrestricted permission for samāʿ and ghinā'. But Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ṭāhir exaggerated their permissibility and declared it to be absolute."[1]

Their arguments have been conclusively refuted by the scholars. However they continue being recycled by those interested in justifying music. The latest attempt is made in a fatwa of al-Azhar. In this chapter we look at all three.

Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064)

ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī was a very intelligent and sharp scholar. He authored more than four hundred works, forty of which are available today. He did much to revitalize the Ẓāhirī school, started by Dāwūd ibn ʿAlī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 270/884), which denied the legitimacy of legal rulings based upon *qiyās* (analogy) and insisted on a literal interpretation of legal injunctions in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. Ultimately the school disappeared because of the built-in problems in its doctrine. Ibn Khaldūn reports: "The Ẓāhirī school has become extinct today as the result of the extinction of its religious leaders and the disapproval of its followers by the great mass of Muslims."[2]

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[1] Al-Ḥasanī, *Al-Ghinā' fi 'l-Islām*, 85.

LITERALISM

We can gain an understanding of the problems of literalism by looking at an example. There is a ḥadīth of the Prophet ﷺ that says: "Let no one urinate in still, non-running water and then use it to bathe."[3] Ibn Ḥazm interprets it to mean that the prohibition applies only to the person who directly urinated in that water; it does not apply if the person defecated in it or urinated in a container and then poured it into the water. Further the prohibition does not apply to any other person; use of such water for bathing is only prohibited to the person who contaminated it.[4] He responds to the obvious question about the basis for his differentiation between urination and defecation:

> (If the objection is raised as to) who before you made the distinction between the person who urinates and the person who defecates in stagnant water, we say: It was made by the Prophet ﷺ . . . when he mentioned the ruling of the one who urinates but remained silent about the one who defecates, expectorates, or blows his nose into the water.[5]

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[2] *Muqaddimah Ibn Khaldūn*, الباب السادس ، الفصل السابع : علم الفقه وما يتبعه من الفرائض [Chapter 6, Section 7: Jurisprudence and the science of inheritance], 417.

[3] Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب الوضوء ، باب البول في الماء الدائم [Book: Ablution, Chapter: Urinating in standing water], no. 240; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب الطهارة ، باب النهي عن البول في الماء الراكد [Book: Purification, Chapter: Prohibition of urinating in standing water], no. 682.

[4] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā*, كتاب الطهارة [Book: Purification], Ruling no. 136, 1:135–36.

[5] Ibid., 1:159.

A similar stance from Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī has been mentioned by Imām Nawawī, who comments:

> This is a strange opinion, extreme in its corruption. If true, it is the most repugnant opinion reported from him [Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī], may Allāh have mercy on him.[6]

There are dozens of other issues on which Ibn Ḥazm's legal opinions defy the consensus of the scholars as well as common sense. As another example he rules that a virgin's marriage is valid only if she keeps quiet when asked for her acceptance of the marriage proposal but if she says yes, her marriage will become invalid. He writes:

> The acceptance of a marriage proposal by a previously married woman is only established when she expresses her acceptance by saying so. For a virgin her acceptance of marriage is only ascertained by her silence. If she remains silent that means she gave her acceptance and her marriage is valid. If she speaks either to say yes or no or anything else then her marriage is invalid.[7]

The flaws in his reasoning are worsened by flaws in his otherwise vast knowledge of Ḥadīth. For example he did not know many established Ḥadīth authorities and rejected their reports by labelling them as unknown. This includes a giant like Imām Tirmidhī whose *Sunan* is one of the six canonical collections of Ḥadīth and who had died more than a century before Ibn Ḥazm was born. Other well-known Ḥadīth authorities rejected by Ibn Ḥazm include Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Baghawī (d. 317/929), Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣaffār (d. 341/952), and Abū 'l ʿAbbās al-Aṣamm (d. 346/957).

Imām Dhahabī has noted both Ibn Ḥazm's merits and demerits in his biography. After praising Ibn Ḥazm's brilliance, quick wit, and a large number of fine books written by him, he notes that Ibn

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[6] Al-Nawawī, al-Subkī, and al-Muṭīʿī, *Kitāb Al-Majmūʿ*, كتاب الطهارة ، باب ما يفسد الماء من النجاسة وما لا يفسده [Book: Purification. Chapter: Which impurity renders water unusable and which does not], 1:169–70.

[7] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā*, كتاب النكاح [Book: Marriage], Ruling no. 1835, 9:471.

Ḥazm was unduly influenced by logic and philosophy.[8] He goes on to say: "Ibn Ḥazm wrote a lot, and if I were to start listing all his idiosyncrasies, it would take too long."[9]

Additionally his sharp mind was accompanied by a very sharp tongue. As Ibn Khallikān notes, hardly any scholar was safe from it.[10] Imām Dhahabī writes, "In writing about the imāms he did not maintain any respect but wrote abusive harsh words."[11] As a result many scholars turned away from him.

EXPENSIVE JEWEL AND WORTHLESS BEADS

Imām Dhahabī continues to report that those who read him found his works to be a mixed blessing:

> They found in him an expensive jewel mixed with worthless beads. Sometimes they enjoy, sometimes they are fascinated, and (sometimes) they are shaken by his idiosyncrasies.[12]

These worthless beads include Ibn Ḥazm's case for music, which is based on three arguments. All three have been answered elsewhere in this book so we only make brief references to them here. First, he claims that every single ḥadīth showing prohibition is weak. This claim is the mainstay of his case and is repeated endlessly by proponents of music. It is difficult to imagine that they accepted it because he made a rigorous case for it. Ibn Ḥazm discussed about a dozen aḥādīth on the subject, found fault with each one of them, and then made his bold declaration that every single ḥadīth on the subject was rejectable. This hardly meets any requirements for rigor if we realize that there are more than a hundred aḥādīth on the subject.[13] Further, Ibn Ḥazm's criticism of even this small sample is not entirely valid as we have seen earlier.

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[8] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, "ابن حزم" [Ibn Ḥazm], 18:186–87.

[9] Ibid., 211.

[10] Ibn Khallikān, *Wafiyāt al-A'yān*, "ابن حزم الظاهري" [Ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī], 3:327–28.

[11] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'*, "ابن حزم" [Ibn Ḥazm], 18:186–87.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān has listed one hundred

However, Ibn Ḥazm was willing to change his position on music if there were to be found even one single ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth on the subject. He said:

> By Allāh, if all of these or any one of them were reported from the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ through chains of reliable narrators, we would not have hesitated in accepting it.[14]

This should give something to think about to a sincere follower of Ibn Ḥazm for we have seen several ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth in the Ḥadīth section.

Second, he argues that the verse of Sūrah Luqmān only condemns those who use music to cause distraction from the Path of Allāh. This claim has also been answered by the majority of authorities as discussed in chapter 5. Although the distraction caused is real—and by design in the Imperial Project—it is not the determinant of prohibition, any more than actual intoxication is the determinant of the prohibition of alcohol.

Third, he claims that listening to ghinā' could be good, bad, or neutral based on one's intentions. He writes, "Whoever seeks support for disobedience to Allāh from listening to ghinā' is a transgressor."[15] Then he continues:

> However, if a person listens to ghinā' with the intention of relaxing himself so that he can be strong and active enough to engage in the obedience of Allāh he will be judged as a good and obedient person and his action (of listening to ghinā') is valid. If a person intends neither obedience nor disobedience he will be judged as a person who has engaged in *laghw*, which is excused and overlooked by Allāh. It will be treated in the same way as a walk in the park.

This logic flies in the face of the fact that legal rulings of prohibition cannot be set aside based on intentions. In Islām, as a

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and twelve aḥādīth on the subject in his *Aḥādīth al-Ma'āzif wa 'l Ghinā'*.

[14] Ibn Ḥazm, *Al-Muḥallā*, أحكام البيوع [Rulings of Trade], ruling no. 1565, وبيع الشطرنج، والمزامير، والعيدان، والمعازف، والطنابير: حلال [The sale of chess, mazāmīr, 'ūd, ma'āzif, and ṭunbūr is permissible], 9:57.

[15] Ibid., 9:60.

rule, ends do not justify the means; one's good intentions cannot turn a ḥarām thing into ḥalāl. The whole point about intentions is that good deeds also absolutely require good intentions without which they are worthless, while permissible deeds with proper intentions can turn into acts of worship. Ibn Ḥazm's comments are valid for permissible ghinā', not all ghinā', the bulk of which is impermissible. A walk in the park is permissible to begin with, and if done with the intention of rejuvenating oneself so one can devote more energy to acts of worship, then this walk will also become an act of worship. However this is not a blank check. Not everything that a person may undertake for the purpose of rejuvenation will automatically become permissible.

Ibn Ḥazm further argues that in the absence of good or bad intentions, listening to ghinā' is *laghw*—and therefore permissible. This point has been discussed under the verse of Surah al-Furqān as well as in the section on Imām Ghazālī.

Interestingly Ibn Ḥazm does acknowledge that ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه and his companions used to break duffs.

> We reported from a stronger chain: Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān, from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from Manṣūr ibn al-Muʿtamir, from Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī that the companions of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه used to meet little girls who had duffs and would tear apart their duffs.[16]

To Ibn Ḥazm the words or actions of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه on this issue did not carry any weight. But for the great majority of scholars the converse is true. As we noted in the Ḥadith section, their view has been captured by the poet who said, "*Ḥazm* (prudence) is that you do not follow Ibn Ḥazm."

Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī (d. 507/1113)

Abū 'l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Maqdisī also known as Ibn al-Qaysarānī was a fifth-century Ḥadīth scholar and Sufi who crossed all limits in his defense of ghinā'. While other Sufis sought ecstasy and endeavored to prove that samāʿ for that purpose was permissible within limits and for qualified people, he claimed that all ghinā’ was not only permissible but required. After declaring it a sunnah, he invoked the ḥadīth, “Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not one of us.” [17] Perhaps nobody before or since has had the nerve to make such a bold claim that this ḥadīth applies to ghinā’. Interestingly later on he says that the Companions and others who stayed away from ghinā’ did so because of their greater devoutness.[18] One cannot help wonder what kind of a sunnah it is that it has to be abandoned out of a greater devoutness.

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[16] Ibid.

Like other proponents of samā‘, his case for music is primarily built on the few aḥadīth that show limited permissibility of restricted ghinā’ in weddings, on Eid day, and some other similar joyous occasions. Add to that his twisted logic and some false reports about the indulgence in ghinā’ of the Prophet ﷺ and the Companions, and we get his book, *Kitāb al-Samā‘*.

A CONTROVERSIAL CHARACTER

Ibn Ṭāhir was the most controversial proponent of music in Islām. Scholars like Ibn al-Jawzī questioned his moral integrity and found him to be using even fabricated aḥādīth to argue his case for music. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī says: “It is not permissible to follow both the reports and the reasoning of Ibn Ṭāhir as both are defective. Why not, when he is a liar, innovator, and libertarian (*abāḥī*).” [19]

Ibn Ḥajar was not alone in offering such harsh criticism. Abū Sa‘īd al-Sam‘ānī (d. 562/1167) said he asked his teachers about Ibn Ṭāhir. Ismā‘īl ibn Muḥammad criticized him severely, as did Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Daqqāq. Al-Daqqāq said: “Ibn Ṭāhir was a *malāmatī* Sufi.”[20] The *malāmatī* or self-incriminating Sufis were those who sought to bring blame on themselves by their apparently sinful behavior. Ḥadīth master and historian Abū ’l-

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[17] Ibn Ṭāhir, *Kitāb al-Samā‘*, 10.

[18] Ibid., 67.

[19] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Ra‘ā‘*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم، القسم الأول في سماع مجرد الغناء من غير آلة [Chapter 1: Categories of prohibited and non-prohibited ghinā’, Section 1: Listening to plain singing without instruments], 67–70.

[20] Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Lisān al-Mīzān*, “محمد بن طاهر المقدسي” [Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī], entry no. 6938, 7:211–16.

Qāsim ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1175) said, "Ibn Ṭāhir made obscene errors in his collection of *aṭrāf* (beginnings of aḥādīth) of the six canonical collections."[21] This collection of *aṭrāf* is considered a major work by him. Al-Samʿānī also quoted Ibn Nāṣir as saying that Ibn Ṭāhir wrote a book to justify staring at beardless young boys.[22] Al-Dhahabī wrote: "Ḥafiẓ Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī is not strong. He makes lots of errors. I say that he deviated from the path of Sunnah to that of the abhorrent Sufism."[23]

ALLEGATIONS OF LIES AND FABRICATIONS

Imām Shams al-Dīn al-Ramlī (known as al-Shafiʿī al-Saghīr) pointed out that Ibn Ṭāhir's report about the famous Shafiʿī jurist Isḥāq al-Shīrāzī (d. 476/1083) listening to ʿūd was one of his lies. He wrote,

> What we heard from some Sufis of our time follows the statement of Ibn Ḥazm and the vanities of Ibn Ṭāhir as well as his despicable lies regarding the permissibility of stringed instruments. That should be ignored because of his bad character and because his statements are inadmissible according to the authorities.[24]

Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī said that Ibn Ṭāhir included baseless stories about Imām Mālik and other imāms in his book.[25] He also gave an example of a fabricated ḥadīth quoted by Ibn Ṭāhir in *Ṣafwat al-Taṣawwuf,* his book on Sufism. The story goes as follows. One day the Messenger ﷺ asked the people around him if anyone of them could sing. A Bedouin answered in the affirmative and sang these verses:

"The snake of desire bit my liver. There is no doctor or soothsayer who can treat that. Except the beloved who has totally absorbed me. He does have the antidote and charm for my treatment."

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Al-Ramlī (known as al-Shafiʿī al-Ṣaghīr), *Nihāyat al-Muḥtāj*, كتاب الشهادات [Book of Testimony], 28:286.

[25] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 160.

The story continues that the Messenger ﷺ and the Companions went into a state of ecstasy upon listening to it. The cloak of the Messenger ﷺ fell from his shoulders. When they recovered everyone went back to his place. Muʿāwiyah رضي الله عنه said, "O Messenger of Allāh, What a beautiful delight it was." The Messenger ﷺ replied, "It is not a noble person who is not shaken when listening to the mention of the beloved." Then he tore his cloak into four hundred pieces and distributed among those present.[26]

Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (d. 974/1566) commented, "This is one of the fabricated and false aḥadīth reported by the liar Ibn Ṭāhir through his false chain; it is not permissible to even mention it except to expose its lie so common people are not deceived by it."[27] Prominent Sufi master and Shāfiʿī jurist Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) wrote, "Something inside me tells me that it is not true . . . The heart refuses to accept it."[28] Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) said, "By consensus of the scholars, this is a fabricated ḥadīth. This, and similar aḥadīth have been reported by the person who is most ignorant of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his Companions and their Successors."[29] Imām Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) said, "This is a false ḥadīth by agreement of Ḥadīth scholars."[30]

According to al-Kattānī, Imām Nawawī (d. 676/1277) said, "This ḥadīth is false and it is not permissible to propagate it or attribute it to the Prophet ﷺ and whoever does that should be punished severely." He also notes that Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī said, "It will be apparent to anyone who reflects on it that this is a fabricated ḥadīth because of its poor choice of words, the inconsistency of its verse with standards of eloquence in Arabic poetry, and its opposition to the authentic prohibition of wasting wealth."[31] Many other authorities declared it to be a fabrication. What is even more amazing is that Ibn Ṭāhir claimed that this ḥadīth met the criteria of Bukhārī and Muslim for authenticity.[32]

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[26] Ibid., 154–56.

[27] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, تنبيه سادس: مناقشة آدلة التحليل [Caution 6: Questioning evidences for permissibility], 69.

[28] Al-Suhrawardī, *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif*, باب الخامس والعشرون في القول في السماع تأدبا واعتناء [Chapter 25: Manners and considerations for samāʿ], in Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 5:123.

[29] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Risālat al-Samāʿ wa 'l-Raqṣ* as quoted in Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 156.

[30] Imām Suyūṭī, *Al-Ḥāwī lil-Fatāwī*, 1:136, as quoted in Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 156.

IBN ṬĀHIR'S LOGIC

Ibn Ṭāhir's book *Kitāb al-Samāʿ* was published from manuscript in 1970 during the reign of Gamal Abdul Nasir by the official Committee for the Revival of Islāmic Heritage in Egypt. In it the author comes out as a person whose single-minded devotion to ghinā' even blinds him to simple logic. Consider the ḥadīth (mentioned in chapter 4) in which the Prophet ﷺ described how Allāh protected him from listening to ghinā' on two occasions before his prophethood. To Ibn Ṭāhir this ḥadīth is proof *for* the permissibility of music. His logic: the report affirms the pre-Islāmic practice and there is no statement prohibiting it (as he rejects all such reports), so it remains permissible by default.[33]

Similarly, he quotes the ḥadīth about Allāh listening more attentively to the Qur'ān being recited in a beautiful voice than a master listening to the singing of his slave girl to imply the permissibility of the latter. It is like claiming that if somebody said, "I like my glass of orange juice more than you do your cup of wine," it would imply that wine was permissible. His use of the verse from Sūrah al-Jumuʿah (discussed in chapter 5) uses the same logic.

REJECTING COMPANIONS' VIEWS

Even more interesting is his refutation of the commentary by prominent Companions like ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd and ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنهما on the verse of Sūrah Luqmān. They said unequivocally that it referred to ghinā' as we saw in chapter 5. Ibn Ṭāhir first says, without offering any evidence, that he looked at all the chains of transmission of these commentaries and found them to be weak. In reality, the attribution of these famous statements to these Companions is established beyond a shadow of doubt. Ibn Masʿūd's statement has been included in the tafsīrs of Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Jarīr, and Imām Qurṭubī as well as in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* of al-Bayhaqī and *Mustadrak* of Ḥākim. Similarly the statement of Ibn ʿAbbās has been reported by Imām Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* and by al-Bayhaqī in *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*.

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[31] Al-Kattānī, *Tanziyat al-Sharīʿah*, 2:33, as quoted in Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 156.

[32] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 160–61.

[33] Ibn Ṭāhir, *Kitāb al-Samāʿ*, 71–72.

Ibn Ṭāhir then questions these Companions' eligibility for giving commentary in the first place. "Did the Prophet ﷺ know this interpretation or not?" he asks. "If you say no, you are committing apostasy. If you say yes, then the Prophet's words saying so have not reached us (and thus we are not bound by this interpretation)."[34] This is interesting and far-reaching logic. There are innumerable comments in tafsīr and fiqh from the Companions that are an invaluable part of the Islāmic scholarly heritage. They had the sole mission of teaching others what they learned from the Messenger ﷺ. This is what they did whether or not they attributed their exact words to him. All their work can be discarded using Ibn Ṭāhir's logic.

Interestingly this argument also makes the first one irrelevant. Why worry about whether the chain of transmission bringing a Companion's statement is strong or weak when the statement is not admissible anyway?

REJECTING ALL TAFSĪRS

Then he goes even further and insinuates that all tafsīrs are baseless. He does so by quoting Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal out of context to the effect that three types of books have no basis (*aṣl*): *maghāzī* (stories of battles), *malāḥim* (epic stories), and tafsīrs.[35] Imām Aḥmad's statement has been quoted by Ibn Taymiyyah. He explains that what Imām Aḥmad was discussing was the simple fact that books of tafsīr do not always contain continuous chains of transmission and contain many *marāsīl*:

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[34] Ibid., 76.

[35] Ibid., 77.

> It is known that most of what has been quoted in tafsīr is like what has been quoted in *maghāzī* and *malāḥim*. For that reason Imām Aḥmad said that three things have no *isnād* (chains of transmission): *tafsīr*, *malāḥim*, and *maghāzī*. According to some reports (he said) they had no *aṣl*, meaning *isnād*. This is so because most of these are *marāsīl* . . .[36]

He mentions the names of the experts in each discipline whose marāsīl are often quoted and then explains that having marāsīl is no cause for rejection:

> As for tafsīr, the most knowledgeable about it are the people of Makkah, because they were the companions of Ibn ʿAbbās like Mujāhid, ʿAṭā' ibn Rabāḥ, ʿIkrimah, Tawūs, Abū Shasha, and Saʿīd ibn Jubayr. And so are the companions of Ibn Masʿūd from Kūfa. They are the ones who have a distinction over others . . . When there are multiple marāsil and the possibililty of a conspiracy or chance (creating multiple identical reports) is not there then they are absolutely sound.

Thus, marāsīl *are* acceptable. Additionally the commentaries of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd and ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās and their companions رضي الله عنهم are highly acceptable because they are the most knowledgeable in tafsīr. This is exactly the opposite of what Ibn Ṭāhir is suggesting while using this quote.

As stated earlier Ibn Ṭāhir's main argument is based on the aḥādīth showing limited exception in weddings, on Eid day, and upon return from a journey. Without giving any evidence he implies that the permission is general, universal, and overriding. Then he rejects everything that opposes this conclusion on the basis that it is opposing the verdict of the Prophet ﷺ.

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[36] Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, 22–25. Marāsīl is plural of *mursal*. A mursal report is one in which the name of the Companion who heard a statement directly from the Prophet ﷺ is missing. When a Successor says that the Prophet said such and such, this is a mursal report.

MISGUIDED PIETY?

But there is a problem. Even Ibn Ṭāhir cannot ignore the fact that there is overwhelming opposition to ghinā' in the words and actions of the Companions, Successors, and their followers. He tries to find his way out of this problem by suggesting that this was just a personal dislike because of their greater devoutness, no different than their abandoning of good clothes and fine foods. "It was the later people who went further and declared ghinā' prohibited, seeking a reputation for piety with the masses."[37] Needless to say, it is hard to reconcile this with the actual statements and actions of these authorities. For example we have seen that ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه and his associates used to destroy duffs if they found them in the hands of children and Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah رضي الله عنها asked a singer, who had come to placate her sick nieces, to be immediately expelled from the home, calling him a Shayṭān. Additionally, we have already witnessed Ibn Ṭāhir's efforts to discredit the commentaries of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd and other Companions. Why did he have to do that when it was only much later that the people declared it prohibited out of a misguided piety?

Overall, after carefully reading his book one becomes more sympathetic to the criticism of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī regarding him. Ibn Ṭāhir's are strong words in defense of unlimited ghinā', but flimsy arguments, poor logic, and questionable references. He begins the discussion by reminding us that declaring something ḥalāl or ḥarām is a serious matter. One who declares something ḥalāl to be ḥarām is as bad as the one who does the opposite. That important caution seems to have been forgotten in the remainder of his book.

The Fatwa of al-Azhar

Al-Azhar is the great Islāmic institution that signifies authority for many Muslims. Founded by the Fatimids, then won over by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī for serving mainstream Islām, it has a long and checkered history. It suffered during the colonial rule when it was manipulated to fit the goals of the colonial masters. For more than a century many lax and controversial religious verdicts have come out bearing its seal of approval. This includes a fatwa issued by Shaykh Jād al-Ḥaqq ʿAlī Jād al-Ḥaqq (d. 1996) declaring music, musical instruments, and music education as generally permissible. The fatwa was issued in 1400/1980. However it has found wide circulation only recently, especially due to the Internet, through a later English translation done by Shaykh Michael Mumisa, then a lecturer at the University of Birmingham. The original Arabic fatwa is available on the al-Azhar website.[38]

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[37] Ibn Ṭāhir, *Kitāb al-Samāʿ*, 67.

AL-AZHAR THREE CENTURIES AGO

About three centuries ago, one of al-Azhar's great scholars, Shaykh ʿAlī al-Nūrī, had issued a different fatwa on the subject. He said to those who were trying to justify music for samāʿ, "Allāh's remembrance should be from the bottom of one's heart, not from playing an instrument of diversion."[39] Obviously much has changed at al-Azhar during these three centuries. But as Shaykh al-Nūrī's comments reveal, things were not quite right even then. There were problems with some views promoted from al-Azhar at that time and his teacher in some cases kept silent—because he did not think that openly criticizing them would be productive. He writes:

> And as to what is attributed to . . . our Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Nāṣir, his silence is not because of his approval of it . . . Perhaps he saw the benefit of silence more than the benefit of speaking out about it. We have seen that from him in many of the wrongs that are done in Jāmiʿ al-Azhar and elsewhere, whereby he did not criticize them when he saw common interest (*maṣlaḥah*) in silence.[40]

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[38] Dār al-Iftā' al-Miṣriyyah. http://www.dar-alifta.org. Fatwa number 3280, dated 12 August 1980. Accessed June 2007.

[39] Shaykh ʿAlī al-Nūrī declared all musical instruments except the duff (on special occasions) as ḥarām. See his introduction and statement that begins on page 185. The discussion was only about Sufi spiritual singing because there was consensus on the prohibition of music for vain entertainment.

[40] Al-Nūrī, *Risālah fī Ḥukm al-Samāʿ*, 18.

As for the current fatwa, it is a curious mix of discredited arguments from Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī and Ibn Ḥazm; misquotes from Imām Qurṭubī, al-Kāsānī, al-Ghazālī, al-Shawkānī, Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, and other fuqahā'; and unsubstantiated claims by the author of the fatwa. It reminds one of the warning of Sulaymān al-Taymī (d. 184/800): "If you take advantage of concessions from or slips of every scholar then you will collect all evil."[41] Interestingly the fatwa invokes with equal zeal Ibn Ḥazm who justifies lahw, and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī who condemns it. The problems of the fatwa have been multiplied by its English translation, which has taken liberties to add statements not found in the original Arabic version.[42]

The fatwa begins by quoting with approval the claim of Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, "There is no strong or weak evidence about *qaḍīb* (sticks) and *awtār* (stringed instruments) showing either prohibition or permission . . . As for the awtār, the ruling for them is the same as for qaḍīb. The Sharīʿah does not provide either prohibition or permission." The English translation goes much further. It says, "Thus, the Islāmic ruling regarding all forms of musical instruments is the same. There is no single evidence from the Sharīʿah to prove that they are either prohibited or allowed." It has transformed awtār (stringed instruments) into "all forms of musical instruments."

Later this fatwa does quote, without any realization of a contradiction, that according to Imām Ghazālī awtār are prohibited as are mazāmīr and kūbah; according to al-Kāsānī ʿūd and other instruments are prohibited; and according to Ibn Qudāmah qaḍīb is disliked when it is accompanied by clapping, singing, or dance.

The reality is bigger than these small concessions, though. As we will see in the next chapter, according to the majority of the jurists all musical instruments are prohibited except duff—and that is also permitted on special occasions only.

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[41] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:260.

[42] The English translation has been promoted by a Muslim music business in the UK. It is not an official al-Azhar translation. However it is widely circulated, probably as much or even more than the original. So we are referring to both here, while recognizing that the problems of the translation should not be attributed to al-Azhar.

The fatwa moves on to declare that the people of Madīnah approved of all musical instruments. In the English translation this has been referred to as the Mālikī school. This jump is significant and shows the zeal of the translator. While the claim that "people of Madīnah" approved of music has been made by others in the past, the response has been that Imām Mālik, the most prominent authority in Madīnah, was most certainly opposed to it. When asked about those who approved of ghinā' in Madīnah he famously said that it was only the sinners in the city who indulged in it. Similarly Sayyidunā Qāsim ibn Muḥammad, one of the seven leading jurists of Madīnah, declared ghinā' a falsehood that will be separated from the truth on the Day of Judgment. Thus translating "people of Madīnah" as "the Mālikī school" in this context is a distortion in the English translation.

PERMISSIBLE BY DEFAULT?

The fatwa continues to quote Ibn Ṭāhir who claimed that scholars agreed with the permissibility of all musical instruments based on the principle in Islāmic law whereby all things are considered permissible until there is indisputable evidence from the Sharīʿah to prove otherwise.

While the claim about the scholars' consensus is false, the statement of the principle is true—but misleading. Actually there are three interrelated principles here.

1) In acts of worship everything is prohibited except that which has been specifically commanded.
2) In the mundane things of this world, there are two cases:
   a. For beneficial things the default case is of permission. All beneficial things are permissible until declared otherwise by the Sharīʿah.
   b. For harmful things the default case is of prohibition. All harmful things are prohibited until declared otherwise by the Sharīʿah. (الأصل في المضار التحريم). This well-known principle in jurisprudence follows from the famous ḥadīth saying

لا ضرر ولا ضرار في الإسلام

There is no inflicting or reciprocating harm in Islām.[43]

> This is a general statement, as the word *ḍarar*, or harm, is an indefinite noun. This implies prohibition of everything harmful. Imām Munāwī (d. 1031/1622) says: "This ḥadīth shows the prohibition of all forms of harm except for cause because the indefinite form in negation has a general applicability."[44]

The first principle stands against the use of music in acts of worship; the last against most secular music that is being produced today. Apart from that, the prohibition of musical instruments comes from the *naṣ,* or source texts. Hence the claim for their being permissible by default does not remain valid.

After that we are treated to an argument by Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī using the verse from Sūrah al-Jumuʿah. This has been refuted previously. (See the discussion of this verse in chapter 5.)

IMĀM QURṬUBĪ'S VIEW

Next we see Imām Qurṭubī being quoted out of context. Imām Qurṭubī has discussed the issue of ghinā' in five sections in the tafsīr of the verse of Sūrah Luqmān. In the first section he quotes many statements to the effect that *lahw al-ḥadīth* means ghinā' and then says, "This is the best that has been said on this issue." He then quotes other statements against ghinā' and concludes the section by saying, "It is because of these reports and others that ʿulamā have declared ghinā' to be prohibited."

In the second section he describes the prohibited ghinā', which is the most common one and which excites people toward sensuality.

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[43] Al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id,* كتاب البيوع ، باب لاضرر ولا ضرار [Book: Trade, Chapter: There is no inflicting or reciprocating harm], no. 6536, 4:198; Al-Nawawī, *Al-Adhkār,* فصل في الأحاديث التي عليها مدار الإسلام [Section: Pivotal Aḥādīth for Islām], no. 9/2068, 641. This ḥadīth is also in *Mustadrak* of Ḥākim, *Sunan Ibn Mājah, Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī, Muwaṭṭa'* of Imām Mālik, and other collections. It is ḥadīth no. 32 in the Forty Ḥadīth of al-Nawawī.

[44] Imām Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr,* حرف لا [The word "Lā"], commentary on ḥadīth no. 9899, 6:431.

It is based on poetry that contains flirtation and description of the beauties of women, wines, and other prohibited items. There is no disagreement about its prohibition. The singing that is free from these problems is permissible on joyous occasions, like weddings and Eid, or while performing hard labor as was done while digging the trench in Madīnah. He then quotes al-Qushayrī about the welcome song sung when the Prophet ﷺ arrived in Madīnah and goes on to mention the statement of Ibn ʿArabī, without mentioning his name, that ṭabl is like duff for use in weddings. It is this last part of the second section—an exception to the general ruling of prohibition described by him—that the al-Azhar fatwa has chosen to quote. It is presented as if it represents the sum total of Imām Qurṭubī's position on the issue of music and singing.[45]

Imām Qurṭubī continues in the third section mentioning the views of Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfiʿī, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and others. After quoting the view of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal that a slave girl belonging to some orphans had to be sold as if she was not a singer (despite the fact that she was and could fetch a higher price if declared so), he says, "This is proof that ghinā' is prohibited. Otherwise it would not be appropriate to cause financial loss to the orphans."

The fatwa has conveniently ignored all of this.

IMĀM SHAWKĀNĪ

The same thing is repeated with Imām Shawkānī. In presenting the aḥādīth on the subject of music and their explanation, he has presented both views and occasionally agreed with the arguments of those advocating permissibility. Thus he agrees that calling it *bāṭil* (false) does not amount to saying it is prohibited, as the fatwa quotes. However this is not his final statement on the subject. His conclusion is that even if we can claim that music is not prohibited, it nevertheless remains doubtful and a Muslim should avoid doubtful things. This important conclusion is nowhere to be seen in the fatwa. (For more details of al-Shawkānī's conclusion see chapter 12.)

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[45] There is an additional problem in this quote in that the fatwa authors have given the reference to the book of Ibn al-ʿArabī while attributing the quote to Imām Qurṭubī.

After assuring us that Imām Qurṭubī and Imām Shawkānī were both supporters of music, the fatwa turns to Ibn Ḥazm and his claim that the ruling of music for a given person will depend upon his intention. This we have already answered in the sections on Ibn Ḥazm and Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī.

THE ḤANAFĪ VIEW

The fatwa then moves on to reinterpret the Ḥanafī position on the subject, taking great liberties with the text. After correctly quoting that a person playing the ṭunbūr will lose his status as an upright person and his testimony cannot be accepted, it goes on to claim:

> However, playing all other forms of instruments that do not have the same evil effect on people will not affect a person's reliability in court unless he plays the instruments while engaging in indecent forms of dancing since that is a major sin.

This is a false statement. As we will see in the next chapter, Ḥanafī scholars have made no exemption for "all other forms of instruments" and have not linked prohibition of a given instrument to the indecent acts that may be performed while using it. They have declared all instruments to be prohibited with the exception of the duff under special circumstances.

IMPULSES AND INSTINCTS

Next, the fatwa appeals to an argument from Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Shaltūt that good sounds please us:

> A human being by his very nature is always pleased by beautiful sceneries such as a well-arranged garden, the dancing waves of clear seawater, and is delighted by the sight of a beautiful face as well as pleasant aromas. Sharīʿah does not in any way try to suppress these human impulses and instincts, rather, it regulates them.

The argument that if it feels good it must be permissible is so flimsy we need not spend any more time on it. It has already been discussed in chapter 5. However the last statement quoted above is certainly true. The Sharīʿah does regulate our impulses and instincts. That is why marital and extramarital relations are poles apart in the view of the Sharīʿah, although the latter can appeal to the same impulses. The difference between the permitted and prohibited forms of singing are the same way and this difference cannot be minimized by an appeal to impulses and instincts.

SHAYKH ʿABD AL-GHANĪ AL-NĀBULSĪ

The fatwa then moves on to draw support from Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī. It states:

> Thus, according to him, music is not ḥarām per se but only when it is associated or accompanied by vices or when it becomes a means towards immoral behavior. If it is free from such problems and vices, then it will be allowed to listen to it, study it, and participate in musical events.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī certainly did argue for samāʿ. We have discussed his views in detail in chapter 8. However this quote is misleading. While Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī did use the argument that the problem is with lahw (diversion), and therefore samāʿ free of lahw is permissible, he did declare that samāʿ was ḥarām for most people, including the youth. The al-Azhar fatwa has omitted that crucial conclusion. Additionally, it is to be remembered that this epistle of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī is far from representing Ḥanafī position; not only has it not been accepted by other Ḥanafī scholars, it drew strong censure from such a Ḥanafī authority as Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī.

The fatwa then makes an incomprehensible statement about the real difference of opinion among the scholars on the issue of music.

> The only point of difference that ensued between the jurists and found its way in their books was regarding whether or not it was permissible to listen to music, attend musical gatherings,

> and learn it when it was accompanied by prohibited things like drinking of alcohol, sensuous songs, and love poetry, or when it was the music that stimulates lusts and sinful behavior like that which leads listeners to dance or impudent actions, or is used in ḥarām and immoral behavior or causes one to miss one's obligations.

Is the fatwa saying that there are some jurists who hold music permissible even in the presence of alcohol consumption and other vices? In reality the difference of opinion has been on samāʿ, while the kind of music described here is prohibited by consensus.

THE PRINCIPLE OF *SADD AL-DHARĪʿAH*

The fatwa then takes a shot at the principle of *sadd al-dharīʿah*. *Sadd al-dharīʿah* is an important principle in Islāmic jurisprudence that holds that whatever leads to a prohibited act is also prohibited. The goal is to stop an evil before it materializes. Hashim Kamali notes that Ibn Qayyim recorded at least seventy-seven instances and rulings of the learned Companions and the subsequent generations of *ʿulamā'* in which they resorted to it.[46] Further, as reported by the Mālikī jurist al-Shāṭibī, despite differences of opinions, "the *ʿulamā'* of various schools are essentially in agreement about the conceptual validity of *sadd al-dharīʿah*."[47] The fatwa offers no evidence why this principle should be set aside, only a claim: "The legal principle of *sadd al-dharīʿah* . . . is neither acceptable nor valid because although music is sometimes associated with corruption, this is not usually the case." Sadly, the corruption has been so complete that even its realization has vanished. It may be noted that according to the jurists the *dharīʿah,* or means, may fall in one of four categories depending upon its likely result: it may definitely, most likely, frequently, or rarely lead to evil. In the first three cases there is broad agreement on its prohibition, while in the last case it is considered permissible.[48] So the fatwa is in effect saying that music rarely leads to evil.

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[46] Kamali, *Principles of Jurisprudence*, 401.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 401–5.

PLEASURABLE = PERMISSIBLE

The fatwa ends with another interesting (and equally misleading) argument. It refers to two verses of Sūrah al-Aʿrāf. The first is: "Say: Who has prohibited the embellishment of God which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?"[49] The second verse is: "And he makes lawful to them the good things and makes unlawful to them impure things."[50] The argument is that the words "embellishment of God" in the first verse and "good things" in the second refer to sources of pleasure. So whatever is pleasurable must be permissible.

If we accept this principle then we can erase most sins from the books.

The fatwa mentions the names of Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām and al-Shawkānī implying that both approved of music in all its forms and considered it among the *ṭayyibāt.* This is untrue. Despite his reservations about a consensus on the prohibition of music, al-Shawkānī discouraged indulging in it. Similarly Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām declared musical instruments as prohibited. He wrote: "The ḥarām entertainments according to the majority of the ʿulamā (include) listening to string instruments and mazāmīr, for these involve committing ḥarām and seeking pleasure from ḥarām venues."[51]

Overall the al-Azhar fatwa does not contain a single new argument that has not already been rejected in the past. It is misleading in its details and wrong in its conclusions. In its preamble the fatwa does admit that the opinions being expressed here do not represent a consensus; other authorities did declare a general prohibition:

> This question had initially been presented to a group of experts and religious scholars who met to discuss this issue but could not agree on a ruling. They were divided into two camps, those who considered it permissible and those who regarded it ḥarām.

As we shall see in the next chapter, it is the second group that finds overwhelming support among the jurists in all schools.

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[49] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Aʿrāf 7:32.

[50] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Aʿrāf 7:157.

[51] Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, *Qawāʿid al-Aḥkām*, 2:182.

CHAPTER 10

THE RULINGS OF THE JURISTS

THE PEOPLE WHO ARE CHARGED WITH THE TASK OF interpreting the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and the words and actions of the Companions and drawing legal rulings from them are the *fuqahā'*. They have the special training and the necessary background for this delicate task. Interestingly, despite much clamor about music being a very controversial issue, there is a surprising consensus on it among them. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī writes, "It is well known that in the four schools ***mazāmīr*** (wind instruments), ***awtār*** (stringed instruments), and ***kūbah*** (drum) are prohibited. So playing them or listening to them is ḥarām according to them."[1] This covers almost all musical instruments, since based on the method of producing sound musical instruments fall in three categories: wind instruments, stringed instruments, and percussion instruments (like the drum). As we shall see below, the agreement also extends to professional singing and mixed gatherings.[2]

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[1] Al-Ḥasanī, *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 87.

[2] From the discussions of the jurists, we can deduce that two attributes characterize a ***mughannī***, or professional singer: i) He earns a living through singing. ii) He has developed the expertise through practice or training to cause ṭarab.

There are three principles underlying this juristic consensus.[3] The minor differences between schools are only related to the application of these principles to particular situations.

First, while there is some room for healthy recreations in life, a mere pastime or vain entertainment is not permissible. It is a waste of precious time. Additionally it is imitation of the *fāsiqs,* or those given to a lifestyle of sinfulness. Islām holds that those who pay heed and the heedless cannot be identical; their lifestyles, their outlooks, and their concerns must be different. So it takes great care in keeping the distinctions alive in the lives of its followers. Thus we find Imām Ghazālī declaring all those musical instruments prohibited that were associated with the *mukhannaths* and the wine drinkers. The former were the professional singers. This stipulation additionally reminds us that not only the professional singer is not acceptable; a healthy distance must be maintained from him and his instruments for the singing to be permissible. It goes without saying that Islām cannot be indifferent to the global monoculture being pushed today. This monoculture aims at destroying precisely those boundaries that Islām takes great care in establishing and preserving.

Second, the ghinā' that leads to some sins—for example that which may interfere with the discharge of one's religious obligations like ṣalāh or which may excite unhealthy emotions—is prohibited.

Third, the ghinā' that accompanies other sins—for example, when the singer is a woman for a male audience or when the audience is mixed—is also prohibited.

With that general background we can now look at the rulings of each school.

Ḥanafī School

The Ḥanafī school, like other schools, does not consider professional singing or most musical instruments to be permissible. There is a consensus that the *mughannī* (professional singer) is a person of poor moral standing whose testimony is not admissible in an

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[3] Shafīʿ, *Islām awr Mūsīqī,* 259–60.

Islāmic court.[4] Personal singing without the use of instruments is allowed provided certain conditions are met:[5]

a. One's singing is not solely an act of vain entertainment; rather one sings for some genuine purpose like fighting loneliness, facilitating manual labor or travel, or putting a child to sleep, and so on.
b. Singing is not done in the manner of professional singers or following musical rules.
c. The text of the poem being sung is clean. It does not contain reprehensible content like backbiting, mockery of another person, and flirtation.
d. One does not engage in it excessively or make it a habit.

The last condition tells us that excessive engagement in even otherwise permissible singing turns it into a prohibited activity. Thus there is no room for the current lifestyles in which there is hardly a music-free period during the day or night. This excess has been made possible by the advent of machines that can keep on serving music without a break. Needless to say, this stipulation calls for rethinking our relationship with these machines.

There is little room for instrumental music. There is consensus that all stand-alone musical instruments, i.e. instruments that can be used for entertainment by themselves in the absence of singing, are ḥarām.[6] This also includes the duff that contains rattles. Thus the only permissible instrument is the simple duff that does not contain rattles. It is permissible in weddings and some other occasions where celebration is permitted.[7]

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[4] It should be noted that a testimony in the court could potentially lead to a judgment of punishment for someone. Islām's concern for justice requires that only people of good moral standing be allowed to submit such testimony. The rejection of the testimony of a person engaged in music is therefore a rejection of music as an acceptable activity in the Islāmic society.

[5] Shafīᶜ, *Islām awr Mūsīqī*, 277.

[6] Ibid., 260.

[7] Ibid., 265.

These juristic opinions are based on well-known Ḥanafī source texts. The *Hidāyah* says: "A professional singer's testimony will not be accepted because he gathers people for a major sin."[8] In his commentary on this statement, Ibn al-Hummām writes, "The jurists have clarified that singing to earn a living or for vain entertainment is prohibited."[9] He further states: "Singing such poetry is ḥarām that consists of impermissible text." Singing other poetry is permissible. However, "When such permissible poems are sung with malāhī (musical instruments) then they are prohibited. Even songs full of religious admonition and wisdom are prohibited when sung with music. But in this case the reason for the prohibition is musical instruments and not the song."[10]

He goes on to quote Ibn Qudāmah, who writes in his *al-Mughnī*:

> Musical instruments fall in two categories. First, the prohibited ones are the instruments that can cause ṭarab even without singing like mazāmīr (wind instruments), ṭunbūr (mandolin), and the like. This is so because according to the report of Abū Umāmah the Prophet ﷺ said, "Allāh Most High sent me as a mercy to the worlds and commanded me to eradicate maʿāzif and mazāmīr." Second, the permissible one, and it is the duff when used in weddings and on other joyous occasions."[11]

Al-Mughnī is the major text of Ḥanbalī fiqh. Its quotation, without comment, in *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, a prominent text of Ḥanafī fiqh, is significant. It shows the convergence of Ḥanbalī and Ḥanafī jurisprudence on this issue. Not only that but Ibn Qudāmah goes on to state that the Shāfiʿī legal opinion in this matter is the same.

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[8] Al-Marghīnānī, *al-Hidāyah*, كتاب الشهادة ، باب من تقبل شهادته ومن لا تقبل [Book: Testimony, Chapter: Whose testimony will be accepted and whose will not], 3:162.

[9] Ibn al-Hummām, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, كتاب الشهادة ، باب من تقبل شهادته ومن لا تقبل [Book: Testimony, Chapter: Whose testimony will be accepted and whose will not], 7:381.

[10] Ibid., 7:383.

[11] Ibid.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the use of duff on joyous occasions other than weddings.[12] According to Ibn al-Hummām duff is only permissible in weddings, while according to *al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq* it is also permissible on Eid day. Additionally the permission is for women only. Imām Ibn ʿĀbidīn writes: "The permission for use of duff is restricted to women . . . its use by men is disliked under all circumstances because it entails imitation of women." [13]

Listening to female singers is not permissible for men. Imām Ibn ʿĀbidīn quotes Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī: "We consider it permissible for women to converse with *non-maḥram*[14] men (and vice versa) at the time of need. However, we do not consider it permissible that they raise, stretch, and soften their voice in a melodious way as that has within it (the possibility of) exciting lusts in the men and attracting them towards the women. For this reason it is not permissible for a woman to give the call for ṣalāh." [15] Once again this reference to a Mālikī scholar shows the breaking down of the barriers between schools in the discussion on music.

As for the Sufi samāʿ, *al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyyah* is very clear about its prohibition. It quotes from *Jawāhir al-Fatāwā*: "The samāʿ, *qawl*, and dance prevalent in our times, in which the so-called Sufis are engaged, is absolutely ḥarām. It is not permissible to attend it. There is no difference between that and ghinā' and mazāmīr." [16]

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[12] Abū 'l-Layth al-Samārqandī in al-Ḥasanī, *al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 88.

[13] *Hāshiyah Ibn ʿĀbidīn*, 5:482, quoted in ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Aḥadīth al-Maʿāzif wa 'l-Ghinā'*, 277.

[14] A *maḥram* is one's unmarriageable kin. Requirements of hijab are relaxed for *maḥram* relatives.

[15] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, quoted in Ibn ʿĀbidīn, *Radd al-Muḥtār*, كتاب الصلاة ، باب شروط الصلاة ، مطلب في ستر العورة [Book: Ṣalāh, Chapter: Conditions for Ṣalāh, Section: Covering of the *ʿawrah*], 1:299.

[16] *Jawāhir al-Fatāwā*, quoted in Niẓām al-Dīn, et al, *Al-Fatāwā al-Hindiyyah*, كتاب الكراهية ، الباب السابع عشر في الغناء واللهو وسائر المعاصي والأمر بالمعروف [Book: Disliked Actions; Chapter 17: On ghinā', lahw, all sins, and enjoining good], 5:431.

Imām Abū Yūsuf holds that if the sound of maʿāzif and malāhī is coming from a house it can be entered without permission of its owners for the purpose of stopping it.[17]

The prohibition of musical instruments extends to the non-Muslim minorities in Islāmic lands. Imām Muḥammad states: "In every village, city, or orchard of dhimmīs, if they exhibit any sin like fornication or those obscenities that are prohibited in their religion, they will be stopped from it. This also applies to mazāmīr, ṭunbūrs, and ghināʾ. And if someone broke any of these musical instruments there will be no penalty on him."[18]

Mālikī School

Qāḍī Abū ʾl-Ḥasan[19] reports that when Imām Mālik was asked about samāʿ he said, "It is not permissible." He was told that there were people in Madīnah who listened to it. He replied, "It is the debauched here that listen to it."[20] This famous statement summarizes the Mālikī opinion regarding music and singing. This is further expounded in *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*, which affirms that musical instruments and professional singing are prohibited. It quotes other authorities:

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17. Abū Yūsuf, quoted in al-ʿAẓīm Ābādī, *ʿAwn al-Maʿbūd*, كتاب الأدب ، باب كراهية الغناء والزمر [Book: Etiquette, Chapter: Dislike for ghināʾ and wind instruments], commentary of ḥadīth no. 4906, 13:274. Normally rules against invasion of privacy would apply. However when the sound comes out, the sin is no longer being committed in privacy. So authorities can enter the house to protect the society.

18. Ibn al-Hummām, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, كتاب السير ، باب الجزية [Book: International Law, Chapter: Jizyah].

19. Qāḍī Abū ʾl-Ḥasan Alī ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad al-Qaṣṣār (d. 397 AH) was a distinguished Mālikī scholar and a qāḍī in Baghdad. One historian said that he did not meet a more knowledgeable Mālikī jurisprudent. See al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, الطبقة الثانية والعشرون : القصار [Section: The Twenty-Second Generation, Biography: Al-Qaṣṣār], 17:107.

20. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭāʾ*, فصل قد أكمل الله تعالى الدين ولم يجعل فيه هذا السماع [Section: Allah Perfected the Religion and did not make this samāʿ a part of it], 68–69.

> In *al-Mudawwanah*[21] it is stated that the testimony of male and female singers and wailers will be rejected, when they are known for that. Al-Māzarī says that if ghinā' is accompanied by *awtār* like ʿūd or ṭunbūr then it is prohibited. And the same is true of flutes.[22]

Imām Qurṭubī mentions the general prohibition of musical instruments: "What the Sufis have innovated regarding listening to singing to the accompaniment of enchanting instruments like *shabbābah* (flute), *ṭār* (lute), *maʿāzif*, and *awtār*—all that is ḥarām."[23] However he permits drums in battles.

Jaʿfar ibn Thaʿlab al-Udfuwī who wrote in support of samāʿ, nevertheless agrees with a general prohibition of musical instruments. He writes,

> Al-Qurṭubī al-Mālikī, in his *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, upon listing aḥādīth that show prohibition (of musical instruments), wrote that there were other aḥādīth that indicated permission in weddings and on other joyous occasions, so these occasions were an exception to the **general prohibition** [emphasis added].[24]

There is dislike for the use of *zammārah* (flute) and *būq* (trumpet) also known as *nafīr*. *Al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr* notes that their limited use is considered *makrūh* or disliked and anything beyond that is ḥarām, "just as stringed instruments and obscene poetry (are ḥarām)."[25] The covered square drum known as *mizhar* is prohibited. Al-Ḥaṭṭāb, the author of *Mawāhib*, writes, "*Mizhar* (the square drum) is not permissible. It is disliked and it is an innovation."[26]

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[21] *Al-Mudawwanah al-Kubrā* is the essential source text for Mālikī fiqh. The entire book is the transcript of an interview conducted by Saḥnūn ibn Saʿīd al-Tanūkhī. His questions were answered by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim al-ʿUtaqī, a prominent disciple of Imām Mālik.

[22] Al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Ruʿaynī, *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*, باب الشهادات [Chapter: Testimonies], 8:165.

[23] *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, Sūrah Luqmān, verse 6, 16:461.

[24] Al-Udfuwī, *al-Iqnāʿ fī Aḥkām al-Samāʿ*, quoted in al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Ruʿaynī, *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*, كتاب النكاح ، فصل في الوليمة [Chapter: Marriage; Section: *Walīmah* (Marriage Feast)], 5:248.

[25] Al-Dardīr (d. 1201/1786), *al-Sharḥ al-Ṣaghīr*, باب في النكاح ، فصل في الوليمة وأحكامها [Chapter: Marriage, Section: The wedding banquet and its rulings], 2:502.

Like the Ḥanafī school, Mālikīs also prohibit the duff that contains rattles. *Mawāhib al-Jalīl* contains two quotes on the subject:

> (and duff is permissible) when it does not contain strings or rattles. Nowadays it is called *bindīr*. (Similarly) in *al-Madkhal* it is written that according to Imām Mālik, the duff containing rattles is not permissible and so is the *shabbābah*.[27]

According to the majority of Mālikī scholars permission for duff is limited to weddings only and is not extended to other joyous occasions. ʿAllāmah al-Ṣāwī (d. 1241/1825) writes, "Duff is not permissible on joyous occasions other than weddings—e.g. circumcisions—according to the well-known rulings. However according to a lesser-known ruling, it can be used on every joyous occasion for Muslims."[28]

It is not permissible for men to listen to the singing of women. Al-Ṭurṭūshī notes that a woman is not allowed to give the call to ṣalāh, which is an act of obedience. How can then she be allowed to raise her voice in singing.[29]

Shāfiʿī School

The Shāfiʿī school agrees with the Ḥanafī and Mālikī schools on major issues regarding music and singing: Professional singing is prohibited; the professional singer is a person of low moral standing whose testimony is not acceptable in an Islāmic court; it is not permissible for men to listen to female singers; and all wind and stringed instruments are prohibited as are most percussion instruments. There are minor differences regarding duff with rattles as well as *yarā‘* (the shepherd's flute). But these differences are also within the Shāfi‘ī school.

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[26] Al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Ruʿaynī, *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*, كتاب النكاح ، فصل في الوليمة [Book: Marriage; Section: Walīmah (Marriage Feast)], 5:248.

[27] Ibid.

[28] *Ḥāshiyat al-Ṣāwī*, in al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Ruʿaynī, *Mawāhib al-Jalīl*, 2:503. Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣāwī (d. 1241/1825) was a Mālikī jurist. He was born in Egypt and studied at al-Azhar.

[29] Al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kitāb Taḥrīm al-Ghināʾ*, no. 59, pp. 203–204.

Imām Shāfi‘ī wrote, "Ghinā' is a detestable distraction that is akin to falsehood; whoever engages excessively in it is impudent and his testimony will be rejected."[30] He also condemned *taghbīr*, an apparently religious singing ceremony started by deviant Sufis that began with Qur'ānic recitation and included religious poetry.[31] That statement is helpful in evaluating the so-called Islāmic music concerts of today.

Al-Māwardī puts singers in three categories based on the extent of their professionalism and the degree of their involvement. Describing the person in the first category he writes:

> He is known as a singer and is paid for his singing. People invite him for this purpose and visit him in his house for this. Such a person is an impudent person whose testimony will be rejected. He chose the meanest of employments (i.e. singing) and the worst of titles (i.e. singer).[32]

In al-Māwardī's second category is the person with minimal involvement with it. He does not lose his standing. But singing publicly will change that:

> He sings for himself for relaxation when he is at his home. His testimony is acceptable . . . But if a little bit of his singing is accompanied with the prohibited instruments, then we have to see further. If his voice reaches outside the home and others hear him then he is an impudent person whose testimony will

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[30] Imām Shāfi‘ī, *Ādāb al-Qaḍā'* [Court Etiquettes], quoted in al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, كتاب آداب السماع والوجد ، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of Samā‘ and Wajd, Chapter: 1, Differences of scholars on permissibility of samā‘ and exposure of truth regarding it], 2:360.

[31] Ibn Kathīr, in his fatwa quoted in Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, 42.

[32] Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī 'l-Kabīr*, مختصر من كتاب الشهادات ، باب من تجوز شهادته ومن لا تجوز ، القول في الملاهي [Chapter: Whose testimony is acceptable and whose is not. Discussion of musical instruments], 17:192–93.

> be rejected. But if his voice is low and he is not heard and his involvement in it is minimal, then his testimony will not be rejected.[33]

His third category is in between the first two. The person in this category is not singing just for himself:

> He sings for the pleasure of his comrades but he is not totally devoted to it and he does not take payment for it. In this case we need to see further. If he becomes known for this and people invite him for this, then he is an impudent person whose testimony will be rejected. If this does not happen and people do not invite him for this purpose but he publicizes his singing, his testimony will be rejected. However if he hides his singing, his testimony will not be rejected.[34]

Thus professional singing is the cause of a person losing his standing. We can see here a legal mechanism to ensure that people keep their interest in singing to a minimum. Al-Māwardī also divides listeners into three categories based on the degree of their indulgence. He writes:

> As for the listener, there are three possibilities:
>
> 1.) He is totally devoted to listening . . . His testimony will be rejected.
> 2.) He listens occasionally in his privacy for relaxation. His testimony will be accepted as long as he does not listen to the singing of a *non-maḥram* woman.
> 3.) He is between the first two. In this case, if his listening is well known and it distracts him from his tasks, his testimony is not acceptable. Otherwise, it is acceptable.[35]

Most musical instruments are considered prohibited. After quoting aḥādīth that prohibit singing and playing musical

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33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī 'l-Kabīr*, مختصر من كتاب الشهادات ، باب من تجوز شهادته ومن لا تجوز ، القول في شهادة مستمع الغناء [Whose testimony is acceptable and whose is not. Discussion about testimony of listener of ghinā'], 17:193.

instruments, Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī writes: "All of this is explicit and compelling textual evidence that all musical instruments that produce ṭarab are unlawful."[36]

Imām Nawawī writes: "It is unlawful to use musical instruments—such as those that wine drinkers are known for, like the ṭunbūr, ʿūd, ṣanj (cymbals), and Irāqi mizmār (flute)—or to listen to them. It is permissible to play the duff at weddings, circumcisions, and other times, even if it has bells on its sides. Beating the kūbah (a long drum with a narrow middle) is unlawful."[37] The Shāfiʿī position differs from the Ḥanafī position in this detail; according to the Ḥanafī school the tambourine, that is the duff containing bells, is not permissible.

Al-Ghazālī declares mazāmīr, awtār, and kūbah as prohibited, for they are icons of mukhannaths and wine drinkers. Al-Māwardī divides musical instruments into three categories: prohibited, disliked, and permitted. The division is based on the production of ṭarab. It is noteworthy how similar his categorization is to that of Ibn Qudāmah.

> The prohibited include: ʿūd, ṭunbūr, miʿzafah, ṭabl, mizmār, and any other thing that creates a distracting ṭarab by itself. Disliked is that which increases the ṭarab of ghinā', but does not in itself cause ṭarab, like . . . qaḍīb (sticks). The permitted one is what is not an instrument of ṭarab. Thus it includes būq for warning, ṭabl for battle, and duff for the announcement of a wedding.[38]

Here are additional opinions on the subject.

Imām Shīrāzī: "The use of instruments that cause ṭarab without the need for singing is prohibited, such as ʿūd, ṭunbūr, maʿzifah, ṭabl, and mizmār."[39]

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36. Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, مقدمة في ذم المعازف والمزامير والأوتار ونحوهما [Introduction to censure of musical instruments, wind instruments, stringed instruments, and the like], 44.

37. Al-Nawawī, *Minhāj al-Ṭālibīn*, كتاب الشهادات [Book: Testimony], 568.

38. Al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī 'l-Kabīr*, مختصر من كتاب الشهادات ، باب من تجوز شهادته ومن لا تجوز ، القول في الملاهي [Whose testimony is permissible and whose is not. Discussion of musical instruments], 17:191–92.

39. Al-Shīrāzī, *al-Muhadh-dhab*, كتاب الشهادات ، باب من تقبل شهادته ومن لا تقبل

Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām: "... the prohibited entertainments according to the majority of the ʿulamā' such as listening to stringed instruments and mazāmīr."[40]

Imām Nawawī: "All stringed instruments are prohibited without any disagreement."[41]

Al-Shāfiʿī al-Ṣaghīr: "It is prohibited to use or listen to an instrument that is normally used by the wine drinkers, like the ṭunbūr, ʿūd, rabāb (rebec), ṣanj, Irāqi mizmār, and all types of stringed instruments and mazāmīr."[42]

Muḥammad Najīb al-Muṭīʿī: "Prohibited are the instruments that can be played by themselves without being accompanied by singing such as ʿūd, ṭunbūr, ṭabl, mizmār, maʿāzif, nāy, and ***kabar***."[43] This is another way of saying that these instruments cause ṭarab.

Ibn al-Naqīb al-Miṣrī notes that trade in musical instruments is not lawful, because it fails the test of usefulness. He writes: "It is invalid to transact something which is not useful, such as vermin, a single grain of wheat, or unlawful musical instruments."[44] ʿUmar Barakāt explains "unlawful musical instruments" as being "such as the ṭunbūr or mizmār, since there is no lawful benefit in them."[45]

There are minor differences of opinions regarding some instruments within the Shāfiʿī school. For example the yarāʿ (shepherd's flute) is considered permissible by Imām Ghazālī and prohibited by al-Nawawī and others. However, as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ explains, this difference goes away when duff and ghinā' are added to it: "When duff, shabbābah (another name for yarāʿ) and ghinā'

[Book: Testimonies. Chapter: Whose testimony is acceptable and whose is not], 3:441.

[40] Ibn ʿAbd al-Salām, *Qawāʿid al-Aḥkām*, 2:182.

[41] Al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn*, كتاب الشهادات، باب فيما يفيد أهلية الشهادة [Book: Testimony. Chapter: Qualifications for testimony], 8:205.

[42] Al-Ramlī (known as al-Shafiʿī al-Ṣaghīr), *Nihāyat al-Muḥtāj*, كتاب الشهادات [Book of Testimony], 28:286.

[43] Al-Nawawī, al-Subkī, and al-Muṭīʿī, *Kitāb Al-Majmūʿ*, كتاب الشهادات [Testimonies] 23:57.

[44] Keller, trans., *Reliance of the Traveler*, para k2.3, 382.

[45] ʿUmar Barakāt, *Fayḍ al-Ilāh al-Mālik fi Ḥall Alfāẓ ʿUmdat al-Sālik wa ʿUddat al-Nāsik*, quoted in *Reliance of the Traveler*.

are combined then there is consensus on their being prohibited."[46] In other words there is agreement that their combination causes ṭarab while scholars differ on whether they do so individually as well.

There are also differences regarding the extent of permissibility of the duff. While some scholars consider it permissible at all times, others consider it prohibited on occasions other than weddings and circumcisions. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī writes, "A group of our authorities says, it is prohibited outside of these (weddings and circumcisions)."[47]

Some hold it as desirable in weddings. On the other hand some even question its permissibility in all weddings. Al-Māwardī notes that some authorities hold the view that the permissibility of duff at weddings was restricted to certain places and times. At other places it is disliked because it has degraded into impudence.[48]

The issue of bells in duff is also subject to some disagreement. Once again we see that the root of this disagreement is the difference in their judgment on the production of ṭarab. Al-Adhraʿī writes that if the *jalājil* are

> delicate cymbals that are placed through the openings on the sides of the duff, then it [such duff] is prohibited, for it creates more ṭarab than many of the instruments whose prohibition is agreed upon.[49]

He also quotes al-Khawārizmī who wrote in *al-Kāfi* that the duff containing *jalājil* was prohibited for all occasions.[50]

There is also disagreement on whether duff playing is permissible for men or is it restricted to women (playing to a women-only audience). Imām Bayhaqī quotes from his teacher Imām Ḥalīmī without opposing him: "When we permitted duff, we permitted it only for women."[51] Al-Ḥalīmī writes in his *al-Minhāj*: "The striking of duff is not permissible except for women. Because it is originally their act and the Prophet ﷺ cursed those men who imitate women."[52] Al-Subkī contended with him in *al-Ḥalabiyyāt*, arguing that the majority did not differentiate between men and women.[53] But, al-Adhraʿī responds:

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[46] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ighāthat al-Lahfān*, 1:258–59.

[47] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم وغيره، القسم الرابع في الدف [Chapter 1: Types of prohibited ghinā'. Type 4: the duff], 91.

[48] Ibid., 94.

[49] Al-Adhraʿī, quoted in *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, 94–95.

[50] Ibid.

> The fact that it is not recorded that any of the men from our predecessors played the duff affirms the statement of al-Ḥalīmī. For all the aḥādīth and reports mentioned duff-playing as being done by women and girls. And the silence of the majority on this issue is evidence that it was a customary act of women.[54]

Once again we see convergence of schools as he strengthens this position by quoting from *al-Mughnī*, a book of Ḥanbalī fiqh: "The striking of duff by men is disliked under all circumstances. It was played by women. In its playing by men there is imitation of women."[55]

The obligation to attend a wedding when invited is waived if certain conditions hold. Among them is the use of flutes on the occasion. Ibn al-Naqīb al-Miṣrī writes, "It is only obligatory to accept a wedding invitation if the following conditions are met." The fifth condition is: "there will be nothing blameworthy there such as *zumar* (flutes), wine, silk-covered sitting mats . . . and so forth."[56]

Listening to singing from a female is prohibited. Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī quotes Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī through al-Adhraʿī. He says:

> The majority of those who declared samāʿ permissible, have declared it prohibited to listen to singing by a non-maḥram female . . . There is no difference between listening to poetry

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[51] Ibid., 96.

[52] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم وغيره، القسم الرابع: في الدف [Chapter 1: Types of prohibited ghinā'. Type 4: The duff], 96.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Keller, trans., *Reliance of the Traveler*, para m9.2, p. 537.

> or listening to the Qur'ān from her as both (acts) can excite the desires and cause infatuation.[57]

Qāḍī Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī affirms this prohibition under all circumstances:

> As for listening to singing from a non-maḥram female, the Shāfiʿī scholars said: It is not permissible regardless of whether she is exposed or sings from behind a veil and regardless of whether she is free or a slave.[58]

Al-Ghazālī also quotes Imām Shāfiʿī as having said, "If the master of a slave songstress gathers people to listen to her, then he is an impudent person whose testimony is to be rejected."[59]

Finally, singing without musical instruments is permitted within limits. Ibn Ḥajar says:

> As for listening to unaccompanied singing, you should know that according to our school singing or listening to it is offensive except under the circumstances to be mentioned below.[60]

The exceptions include recital of poetry that encourages good deeds, wisdom, noble qualities, abstinence from this-worldly things, or similar pious traits. "This is obvious, since using a (permissible) means to an act of obedience is itself performing an act of obedience."[61]

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[57] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم وغيره، القسم الأول في سماع مجرد الغناء من غير آلة، تنبيه ثان: حكم السماع من حرة أو أمة أجنبية [Types of prohibited ghinā': The first category about simple singing without musical Instruments, Caution 2: Ruling of listening from a free or stranger slave woman], 59.

[58] Al-Ṭabarī, *al-Radd ʿalā Man Yuhibb al-Samāʿ*, 27, كلام الشافعي في مستمع الغناء [Refutation of the one who loves samāʿ]; Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, كتاب آداب السماع والوجد ، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of samāʿ and wajd, Chapter: 1, About the differences among scholars regarding permissibility of samāʿ and the exposition of truth about it], 2:360.

[59] Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, كتاب آداب السماع والوجد ، الباب الأول في ذكر اختلاف العلماء في إباحة السماع وكشف الحق فيه [Book: Etiquettes of samāʿ and wajd, Chapter: 1, About the differences among scholars regarding permissibility of samāʿ and the exposition of truth about it], 2:360.

[60] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, الباب الأول في أقسام الغناء المحرم وغيره، القسم الأول في سماع مجرد الغناء من غير آلة [Types of prohibited *ghinā'*: The first category about simple singing without musical instruments], 49–50. And Keller, *Reliance of the Traveler*, 776.

Similarly singing to facilitate labor or travel is fine. Ibn Ḥajar writes:

> There is no doubt in the permissibility of the (personal) singing that people normally engage in while doing hard labor, carrying a heavy load, or what they do for rest and recreation during travel, like the ḥudā' songs of the camel driver, and the singing of people to calm their little children, or that of little girls while playing, provided the songs are free of indecencies and mention of prohibited things like description of wines or songstresses.[62]

Ḥanbalī School

The Ḥanbalī school agrees with others in its ruling about musical instruments and professional singing. Additionally it also calls for destruction of musical instruments and punishment for the singer. We had already seen the statement of Ibn Qudāmah regarding musical instruments in the Ḥanafī section as paraphrased by Ibn al-Hummām. Here is his original statement.

> Musical instruments fall in three categories:
>
> First, the prohibited ones are awtār, nāy (vertical flutes), mazāmīr, ʿūd, ṭunbūr, miʿzafah (psaltery), rabāb (rebec) and the like. Whoever continues to listen to them, his testimony will be rejected.
>
> Second, the permissible one, and it is the duff, for the Prophet ﷺ said, "Announce the wedding and beat duff on the occasion."
>
> (Third, the disliked.) (Duff-playing) by men is disliked under all circumstances since women used to use it, as did the *mukhannaths* (effeminate men) who imitated them. If men beat it they are imitating the women and the Prophet ﷺ cursed the men who imitate women. And the striking with *qaḍīb* (stick) is disliked when some prohibited or disliked thing is added to it like clapping, singing, and dancing. If it is free of all these then it is not disliked

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[61] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, 49–50.

[62] Ibid., 59–60.

> because it is not an instrument and it does not cause ṭarab and it is not listened to by itself in contrast to the musical instruments."[63]

Thus almost all musical instruments fall in the prohibited category with the exception of duff and qaḍīb. Further, even the use of duff by men is disliked as is the use of qaḍīb to enhance a musical program. The permissibility of duff is limited to weddings, circumcisions, and on return from journey. It is disliked on all other occasions.[64]

Regarding the destroying of prohibited musical instruments, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal had a strong position. Abū 'l-Ṣaqr asked him for legal verdict about a man who broke someone else's ʿūd or ṭunbūr. He replied, "The man did the right thing and he did not have to pay any compensation."[65] This also applied to the toy ṭunbūr:

> Abū Bakr al-Marūdhī reports, "I asked Abū ʿAbdullāh [Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal] about breaking ṭunbūrs (belonging to others). He replied that they should be broken. I asked, what about a small ṭunbūr used by a little child? He replied, 'That should also be broken. If it is exposed, break it.'"[66]

This was also the practice of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal himself. ʿUmar ibn Ṣāliḥ reports, "I witnessed Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. He saw an exposed ʿūd and stood up and broke it."[67] The action is limited to exposed musical instruments as one is not responsible for engaging in spying or searches.

An interesting incident is reported by ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥusayn involving a slave who had a ṭunbūr in his hand and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal broke it. The slave went back to his master and reported the incident. "Did you tell him that you are my slave?"

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[63] Ibn Qudāmah, *al-Mughnī*, كتاب الشهادات، مسألة ١٨٩٠، فصل في الملاهي [Book: Testimony, Ruling 1890, Section: Malāhī] 14:157–160.

[64] ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, *Aḥādīth al-Maʿāzif wa 'l-Ghinā'*, 271.

[65] Al-Khallāl, *al-Amr bi 'l-Maʿrūf*, باب الإنكار على من زعم أن عليه الغرم في كسر شيء من المنكرات [Chapter: Refutation of the one who thinks he owes compensation for breaking an atrocious thing], no. 132, p. 145.

[66] Ibid., باب ذكر الطنبور [Chapter: Ṭunbūr], no. 123, p. 142.

[67] Ibid., no. 124.

asked the master. The slave said, “No.” Happy that by not exposing his identity the slave had protected his prestige, the master said, “I have freed you for the sake of Allāh.”[68]

Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal was not unique in this. *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ* states that according to Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh, Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ, and Qāḍī Shurayḥ there is no fine on the person who breaks a musical instrument of someone else.[69]

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal also recommended *taʿzīr* (discretionary punishment) for the musician. Yaḥyā ibn Yazdād asked Imām Aḥmad about punishment for the person who played ʿūd, ṭunbūr, or mazāmīr. He said, “He should be punished and I think that the punishment should not exceed ten lashes.”[70]

There is one statement of Imām Aḥmad whose milder tone might cause some confusion. It is reported by his son ʿAbdullāh that when he asked him about ghinā’, Imām Aḥmad replied, “It creates hypocrisy in the heart. I do not like it.” Apparently a show of dislike is not the same as a judgement of prohibition. However, as Ibn Qayyim explains, on many occasions Imām Aḥmad did use such words to refer to ḥarām (prohibited) things. For example, he said, “I dislike the meat of the animal slaughtered in the name of stars.” Such meat is prohibited by consensus as the Qur’ān clearly declares it such. Ibn Qayyim has given many more examples of the use of the understatement by Imām Aḥmad when talking about prohibited items.[71]

In light of other statements quoted earlier, it is easy to see that Imām Aḥmad’s position was that of prohibition. This is also made clear by al-Ḥafīd who says that we can reconcile the different reports regarding the stand of Imām Aḥmad about ghinā' by concluding that the poetry that stimulates us to remember the Hereafter and do virtuous deeds is permissible, while other forms of singing prevalent today are prohibited. After quoting the statements of Imām Mālik, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, and Imām al-Shāfiʿī, he says, "the scholars of all Islāmic lands are agreed upon the prohibition of ghinā'. Only an ignorant person, or one overwhelmed by his desires, can claim permission for it."[72]

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[68] Ibid., no. 125.

[69] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, 18, quoting Abū Bakr al-Khallāl in *al-Amr bi ’l-Maʿrūf*.

[70] Al-Khallāl, *al-Amr bi ’l-Maʿrūf*, باب ما يؤمر به من أدب اللعابين بالمنكر [Chapter: What was commanded for disciplining those who engage in atrocious play], no. 102, p. 130.

[71] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn*, لفظ الكراهة يطلق على المحرم ودليله ، و غلط المتأخرين في ذلك وسببه [Section: Dislike means prohibition and the evidence for this. The error of later people regarding that and the reason for their error], 2:75–78.

Salafi Position

As we have seen, all four schools are agreed upon major provisions of the ruling on singing and music. They quote from the same verses and the same aḥādīth and reach the same conclusion. They also quote from each other, further showing the convergence in their positions. This convergence continues as one goes further and examines Salafi and Shīʿah positions.

Normally a discussion of the four schools would be sufficient to get the range of Islāmic legal opinions on a subject. However we are going beyond to show that the issue that is perceived to be very controversial in fact enjoys a rare consensus.

Since Shaykh Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī is a well-known exponent of the Salafis, we produce below his conclusions on the subject. These are taken from his book *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab* (Prohibition of the Instruments of Enchantment).

According to Albānī, the large number of aḥādīth on the subject shows that their common point—namely prohibition—is certainly proven to be from the Prophet ﷺ. This would be so even if each single ḥadīth had some defect in its chain, as was claimed by Ibn Ḥazm, because multiple reports from weak chains strengthen each other.[73] However, there are many ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth on the subject. "These aḥādīth clearly show the prohibition of instruments of ṭarab (i.e. musical instruments) in all their shapes and forms."[74]

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[72] Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥafid, *Majmūʿat al-Ḥafid,* quoted in Shafiʿ, *Islām awr Mūsīqī*, 317.

[73] Al-Albānī, *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab*, 36.

[74] Ibid., 92.

He notes that the scholars and jurists—including the four imāms—are agreed upon the prohibition of musical instruments as a result of following the aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ and the statements of the pious predecessors.[75]

Duff playing is permissible only in weddings and on the day of Eid. It is not permissible on other joyous occasions. Further, its permissibility is limited to women (who can play for a women-only audience).[76]

Singing without musical instruments is permitted under some circumstances, for example, when it is used to remind one of death, to express longing for the family and home, for recreation, or to make light of travel or labor, provided it is not taken up as a profession, it does not exceed moderation, and nothing is done that is undignified.[77]

Sufi singing is not permissible because it is meant to seek closeness to Allāh and only the acts explicitly commanded by the Sharīʿah are permissible for this purpose.[78]

Shīʿah Position

The Shīʿah position is stricter than that of Ahl al-Sunnah. Probably the reason is that the Shīʿahs, as a rule, reject all the mainstream reports. This includes all the reports that indicate some exception to the general prohibition of music and singing. The reports that indicate prohibition are more common and are found in their collections as well. Some of these use the same text, but a different chain of transmission, in the Shīʿah sources.

Later Shīʿah scholars have tried to allow for certain exceptions (like the use of duff in weddings or singing of laments for Imām Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه), but their task is made difficult by the original source texts and the mass of solid juristic opinion produced by the earlier scholars. A good glimpse into this is provided by a recent book of ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Ḥammūd.[79] The following is taken from this book.

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[75] Ibid., 105.

[76] Ibid., 181.

[77] Ibid., 129.

[78] Ibid., 158–161.

Ghinā' is the stretching of sound that includes ṭarab-producing chanting (*tarjīʿ*). Ṭarab is a by-product of tarjīʿ. For ghinā' to be prohibited it is not necessary that ṭarab be actually produced; only that it is in the nature of that chanting to produce it. There may be many factors that prevent its actual realization, like a bad voice, health problems with the listener, worries, genetic defects, or a strong internal moral force. Thus even if a person is not affected by ghinā', it does not become permissible for him to listen to it or for another person to sing to him.[80]

There is no disagreement among Imāmiyyah jurists regarding the prohibition of ghinā'. The difference is about the nature of that prohibition, whether it is intrinsic (i.e. singing is prohibited for its own sake) or extrinsic (i.e. it is prohibited for some external cause). The majority of Shīʿah fuqahā' hold the first position so that it represents a near consensus. Some of the later scholars hold the second position. This includes Muḥsin Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680), author of *al-Mafātīḥ*, Ḥājj Mullā Hādī al-Sabzawārī (d. 1292/1873), author of *Kifāyat al-Aḥkām*, and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (d. 1373/1954).

Al-Kāshānī and al-Sabzawārī hold that singing becomes prohibited when it is performed in special places designated for it or in gatherings (*ḥafalāt al-ṭarab*) where other Sharīʿah prohibitions are violated. Some other contemporary scholars check if a certain singing falls into the category of prohibited amusement (*lahw al-muḥarram*) regardless of where it occurs.

The prohibited things mentioned by al-Kāshānī include: 1) Appearance of men in the presence of women. 2) Men listening to the singing of women. 3) Singers speaking vanities (*abāṭīl*). 4) Use of prohibited musical instruments like ʿūd, qaḍīb, etc.[81]

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[79] Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Ḥammūd, *al-Qawl al-Faṣl bi-Ḥurmat al-Ghinā' fī 'l-ʿUrs: Dirāsah Fiqhiyyah Istidlāliyyah Jadīdah wa Farīdah fī Manhajiyyatihā* [Conclusive word for the prohibition of singing in weddings: A new and unique study using juristic arguments]. The title of this book is misleading for it discusses all types of music and singing and not just that employed in weddings.

[80] Ibid., 30.

The prohibition of ghināʾ is not based just on *ijmāʿ muḥaṣṣal* and *ijmāʿ manqūl* but there is also *ijmāʿ dukhūlī* through which we can see the opinion of the "Impeccable Imām" and therefore prohibition of ghināʾ is a basic essential in religion.[82]

Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq said regarding the verse "*lā yash-hadūn al-zūr*" that it refers to ghināʾ. Al-Ṭabarsī said in his tafsīr, "Allāh described the attributes of his sincere servants and said 'They do not witness falsehood,' i.e. that they do not attend gatherings for falsehood and this includes gatherings for ghināʾ."[83]

Muḥammad ibn Muslim reports that he heard Imām Abū Jaʿfar say, "Ghināʾ is among the things for which Allāh has promised the Fire. Then he recited the verse [from Sūrah Luqmān]."[84]

Among the Prophetic traditions that are used by the Shīʿah scholars for declaring the prohibition of ghināʾ are the following:

1. Abū ʿAbdullāh reported that the Messenger ﷺ said, "I forbid for you dance, mizmār, kūbah, and *kabar*."[85]

2. Al-Quṭb al-Rāwandī reported in *Lubb al-Lubāb* that the Messenger ﷺ said,

> We have been prohibited from two foolish sinful sounds: at times of adversity the sound of scratching of face and tearing the clothes, and at times of joy the sound of amusement and playing with musical instruments. And they (i.e. both of these sounds) are the musical instruments of Shayṭān.[86]

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[81] Ibid., 53.

[82] Ibid., 83. *Ijmāʿ al-muḥaṣṣal* (derived consensus) is the juristic opinion arrived at by a qualified jurist through reasoning. *Ijmāʿ al-manqūl* (transmitted consensus) is the juristic opinion received from one or more jurists. *Ijmāʿ dukhūlī* is a higher level of *ijmāʿ* where reports confirm the inclusion of the Imām in the consensus.

[83] Ibid., 87–88.

[84] Ibid., 102.

[85] Ibid., 228.

[86] Ibid., 235.

Note that this is similar to the ḥadīth reported by Sayyidah ʿĀ'ishah and Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنهما in Musnad Bazzār, and Ibn Mardūyah. (See ḥadīths 4 and 5 in the Ḥadīth section.)

The same source also reported, "Angels do not enter a house in which there is alcohol, or duff, or ṭunbūr, or backgammon. The prayers of such people are not accepted and blessing is lifted from them."[87]

3. Abū Umāmah reported that the Messenger ﷺ said,

> Allāh sent me as guidance and mercy for the worlds. And He commanded me to eradicate mazāmīr, maʿāzif, stringed instruments, idols, and affairs of Jāhiliyyah. The buying and selling of mazāmīr, the price received in exchange for them, and all trade in them is prohibited.[88]

Again, this ḥadīth can be found in the Sunni sources as well; for example it was reported in *Musnad Aḥmad*.[89]

4. In *Jāmiʿ al-Akhbār* it is reported that the Messenger ﷺ said,

> The owner of ṭunbūr will be raised on the Day of Judgment with a dark face. There will be a ṭunbūr of fire in his hand. There will be seventy thousand angels over his head, each of whom will be carrying a mace with which he will be hitting his head and face. The singer will be raised from his grave as deaf, dumb, and blind. The fornicator will be raised the same way. The owner of mizmār will be raised the same way. The owner of duff will be raised the same way.[90]

Singing is such an abhorrent practice that socializing with singers is also not permitted. The report of ʿAlī ibn Jaʿfar[91] (who reports from his brother Imām Mūsa ibn Jaʿfar) is clear on the prohibition of sitting with one who sings, regardless of whether or not he is involved in other sins like use of musical instruments.

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[87] Ibid., 235.

[88] Ibid., 235–36.

[89] Abū Umāmah رضي الله عنه in *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند الأنصار رضي الله عنهم ، حديث أبي أمامة الباهلي الصدي بن عجلان رضي الله تعالى عنه [Musnad of the Anṣār, Chapter: Ḥadīths of Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī], no. 22119, 16:238–39.

[90] Ḥammūd, *al-Qawl al-Faṣl*, 236.

[91] Ibid., 139.

Singing laments for Imām Ḥusayn is also included in the prohibited *ghinā'*. Niẓam al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ardabilī (d. 993/1585) was the first Shīʿah scholar to make an exception for it but it has been refuted by other notable scholars. Al-Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī (d. 1281/1865) said,

> Whether the words are true or false makes no difference regarding the prohibition of lahw. So whether it is the recitation of the Qur'ān, or supplications, or laments, there is no confusion about the prohibition of singing them for entertainment and about the increase in punishment for doing so, because it involves disobedience at the station of obedience.[92]

Most of the people singing these laments today are after material gain; in fact they are doing business in the name of Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. They copy the tunes of professional singers and compete with them in their mannerisms and melodies (*alḥān*). All the components of professional singing like melodizing (*talḥīn*), producing enchantment (*taṭrīb*), and frivolity (*khiffah*) are present in the laments for Imām Ḥusayn عليه السلام. The only thing that is missing is the words of love.[93]

Similarly the revolutionary nashīds contain all the components of professional music, as both the laymen and the music professionals agree. They do not become permissible through a change of title.[94]

The Shīʿah position regarding musical instruments is one of total prohibition. "Engaging in them and listening to them are major and deadly sins. Playing them grows hypocrisy in the heart like water grows vegetation. On such a person Shayṭān takes total control and deprives him of the sense of *ḥayā'*."[95]

Breaking and destroying musical instruments is a necessary task for the cutting off of the source of corruption. There is no fine on the person who does so. Many jurists have made that explicit.

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[92] Ibid., 165.

[93] Ibid., 176.

[94] Ibid., 179.

[95] Ibid., 226.

A case was brought to Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه about a person who had broken the *barbaṭ* of another person. Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه dismissed the case.[96]

Conclusion

There is a remarkable consensus across all schools of Islāmic law regarding the general prohibition of music and musical instruments. This applies when the performance involves use of musical instruments that cause ṭarab (use of duff at weddings is an exception to the general prohibition of instruments); when singing is an act of vain entertainment; and when there is a problem with the singer, the song, the time, the place, or the audience.

The discussion in this chapter can be summarized as follows.

1. All stringed and wind instruments are prohibited by consensus, as are almost all percussion instruments, with the exception of duff.
2. Duff is permitted by consensus in weddings and with a difference of opinion on Eid day and other joyous occasions. Its use outside the special occasions is prohibited by a near consensus.
3. According to the majority opinion duffs containing rattles are prohibited.
4. Duff playing is permitted only for girls and women. The verdict for men ranges from disliked to prohibited.
5. Adopting singing as a profession is severely discouraged. A person doing so loses his standing as an upright person in the Sharīʿah. His testimony is not acceptable in an Islāmic court.
6. In the instrument-free singing, ḥudā', rajaz and recitals of good clean poetry are permissible by consensus. When the text is immoral or the singing imitates the professional music tunes and styles or when it aims at producing ṭarab then even instrument-free singing is not permissible.

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[96] Ibid., 233. It should be noted that this is the same position as that of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Isḥāq ibn Rāhawayh, Wakīʿ ibn al-Jarrāḥ, and Qāḍī Shurayḥ.

7. Any singing in a mixed gathering is not permissible.
8. Men are not allowed to listen to singing by women.
9. Even permissible singing and listening becomes prohibited through excessive involvement in it.

It goes without saying that when music and singing is prohibited, the verdict remains the same whether it is live or recorded. The sale, purchase, and use of its records is also prohibited.

The big exception to this consensus was the defunct literalist Ẓāhirī school. Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ṭāhir from this school did try to make a case for general permission. But they overstated their case, thereby destroying it.

What is happening in the Muslim world today is not the result of a resurgent popularity of the Ẓāhirī school. It is a result of external pressures. We examine some specific examples of giving in to this pressure in the first chapter of part 3. Then in the last chapter we will look for advice from trusted authorities that shows us the way out of our current predicament.

Part Three

WHERE NOW?

CHAPTER 11

MUSIC IN MUSLIM SOCIETY TODAY

OVERALL WHERE DO WE STAND? TODAY, THE slippery stone—slippery by nature—is also very wet. Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith is much more deadly for he is equipped with a million machines that can work tirelessly round the clock. The pressures and enticements of pop culture as augmented by the mass media, the new gadgets for recording and playing music, and the multi-billion dollar global music industry are immense. No country, no peoples are immune from them. The attack has been two-pronged. It has established music as a sign of culture, and it has spread that culture everywhere.

The signs of buckling under the pressure are there. The dominant voice says that music is here, it is unavoidable, it is fun, and it may even be permissible (and if not there is no need to worry too much about it). First, the onslaught has caused some Muslims to seek innovative ways of justifying the slide down the slippery slope. A prime example is the sound arts hierarchy (*handasah al-ṣawt*) proposed by Lois al-Faruqi in the 1980s. She introduced this term to gather and organize all possible auditions from an Islāmic standpoint, with Qur'ānic recitation at the top of the hierarchy and sensual music at the bottom. This "Islāmization" of sound arts provides a modern justification for "Islāmic music."

Second, there is a strong plea for saving the youth by countering bad music with "good music." The problem mentioned here is real. While the pressures of pop culture are there for all sections of society, the youth are its prime target. The goal is to divert their youthful energies to wasteful or destructive channels and away from serious and productive avenues where they can make a difference. It is as if the fabled Pied Piper is on the loose, and all the youth are being lured by it. Thus it is no surprise that the issue of music is one of the hottest issues being discussed in Muslim youth forums. Unfortunately such discussions often try to justify pop-culture-light as a legitimate substitute for the heavy pop culture and aim at assuaging the guilt feelings of ambivalent youth. They thrive on popular notions that music is a controversial issue and that there is no single Qur'ānic verse or authentic ḥadīth calling for its prohibition.

Third, even the Qur'ānic recitation, in some cases, is being influenced by an atmosphere supersaturated with music. While *talḥīn* or chanting in Qur'ānic recitation is an old issue, it has taken new significance under the current circumstances.

In this chapter we first review Lois al-Faruqi's proposal, followed by a discussion of the arguments of those who advocate the use of "Islāmic music" to counter Western music. We also look at the music defense put up by nashīd artists. Finally we review the issue of *talḥīn*.

The Sound Arts Hierarchy of Lois al-Faruqi

Lois Lamya Ibsen al-Faruqi (d. 1986) was an American musician-turned-musicologist who focused on Islāmic arts and music after her conversion to Islām. She wrote on the subject for more than three decades. She was concerned about the cultural inferiority complex among Muslims. Her goal was to show that Islām had its own vibrant art tradition driven by its beliefs and worldviews. Unfortunately her campaign was driven more by her love of music than by an objective understanding of Islām's view of it.

Whenever someone presents an Islāmic value as a blemish or an Islāmic teaching as flawed, some well-wishers jump to the "defense" of Islām by claiming that Islām does not hold that value or promote that teaching. It is a clever ploy and it seems to work with many Muslims who are interested in "clearing" the image of Islam. Probably that was also at work here. She found misleading, if not outright denigrating, such Orientalist statements as "Islām has no religious music in our normal sense of the word."[1] It was her goal to prove them wrong.

Al-Faruqi tried to present a unified picture of a sound arts hierarchy under Islām. She coined the term *handasah al-ṣawt* (sound arts) as a substitute for music to avoid hurting Muslim sensibilities but made clear that all of the arts in the ten levels of her hierarchy fell under her definition of "music", starting with Qur'ānic chant, followed by religious chants, chanted poetry with noble themes, family/celebration music, occupational music, military music, vocal/instrumental improvisations, serious metered songs, music related to pre-Islāmic or non-Islāmic origins, and finally sensuous music associated with unacceptable contexts.[2] According to her, only the last category is clearly prohibited, while all others enjoy varying degrees of acceptability based on their conformance to the archetypal Qur'ānic chant. She lumps together the first six categories, including military music, under the ḥalāl label while the next three (vocal/instrumental improvisations, serious metered songs, and music related to pre-Islāmic or non-Islāmic origins) are controversial.

Of course, there is no such hierarchy under Islāmic law. Hers is an attempt to classify the different "sound arts" found in Muslim lands and cultures, while assigning fiqh rulings to each category. But her analysis is faulty on many grounds.

To begin with, her juristic discussion has serious errors. She claims that the term "ḥarām" can be used in a legal sense only for acts that carry a prescribed punishment and "should therefore be thrown out" while discussing music.[3] One wonders what she thought of eating pork, performing an act of worship in a state of ritual impurity, or looking at *non-maḥram* women with lust. All of these acts are ḥarām by consensus, but like hundreds of other ḥarām acts do not necessarily carry a legal punishment. Interestingly she uses the term herself for the last category of her sound arts despite there being no prescribed punishment for it.

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[1] Al-Faruqi, "The Status of Music," 58.

[2] Al-Faruqi, "Music, Musicians, and Muslim Law," 8.

[3] Ibid., 5.

She also has the strange notion that only *mutawātir aḥādīth* carry legal weight, which she searches for only in Bukhārī and Muslim and comes back unsatisfied. She accuses scholars of being guilty of using ḥadīth that lack her criteria for authenticity, but there is not even an attempt to justify her home-made criteria. Little does she realize that despite the fact that the great majority of ṣaḥīḥ aḥadīth are not *mutawātir*, including those in Bukhārī and Muslim, they are reliable according to all Ḥadīth authorities. Nor are Bukhārī and Muslim (or even the six canonical collections) the only collections of ṣaḥīḥ aḥadīth.

She mentions the rejection of a professional singer's testimony in an Islāmic court, but fails to understand its significance. She says it is so, "because he has taken on a profession that has negative social and moral associations in the culture."[4] She does not probe why it has negative social and moral associations and what does that tell us about Islām's view of music.

Her identification of the controversial music is equally wrong. The categories she has listed as controversial are in fact ḥarām by consensus. On the other hand, as we have seen, controversy has existed around the Sufi samāʿ. She fails to mention it at all in her hierarchy.

She does discuss the Sufi concept of "place, time, and brethren" but fails to grasp its true meaning. The Sufi samāʿ is not meant for entertainment, which she repeatedly mentions in this discussion, but for spiritual upliftment and inculcating remembrance of Allāh and the time, place, and brethren are considered necessary for that goal, not for fun.

But it is in the bigger picture where the greatest corruption lies. Her scheme makes the Qur'ānic recitation a part of a continuum that stretches all the way to sensuous singing. It was the pagans of

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[4] Ibid., 22.

Arabia who alleged the Qur'ān to be the work of a poet as a way of belittling it. The Qur'ān condemned them in many places. It distinguishes itself from poetry and its recitation from singing. But al-Faruqi is trying to do exactly the opposite. Despite acknowledging several times that Muslims would never refer to the recitation of the Qur'ān or *adhān* or *talbiyah* or *dhikr* as music, she goes to the extent of finding a common thread between Qur'ānic recitation and such secular Arabic music as *layālī* and *muwashshaḥ* and even the performances in the nightclubs. This she does in stages. According to her, "Even the vocal and instrumental improvisations have shown a degree of formal and stylistic resemblance to the chanting of the Qur'ān."[5] Next, she claims that these improvisations, "bridge the gap between the religious and secular context in Islamic cultures."[6] Finally, this bridge building can go all the way to the nightclub as "such improvisations are sometimes even an important element of the cabaret musical environment."[7]

This scheme tells a Muslim musician that whatever he is doing is somehow patterned after the Qur'ānic recitation (or chant as she calls it) and therefore is ḥalāl. Such delusions may find resonance with music enthusiasts. But the plain truth is that where Islām creates a dichotomy, she claims a continuum. We can understand the gravity of this effort by considering the person who proposes a continuum of grape juices starting with fresh grape juice and ending with one fermented for several months. Needless to say, wine will not become ḥalāl or less objectionable through this machination. Nor will music.

Where all this can lead can be seen in her article "Problems of Music Education in the Arab World" where she advocates universal music education in the Arab/Muslim world as a way of fighting its cultural inferiority complex. Her reasoning goes as follows: colonialism created the inferiority complex by imposing its own system of education and its culture and cutting off the people from their roots. The remedy lies in going back to the roots. In the past

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[5] Ibid., 13.

[6] Ibid., 18.

[7] Ibid.

Qur'ānic recitation was the universal pre-requisite throughout the Muslim world before a student could pursue further education. Qur'ānic recitation is a form of sound art. Hence Muslims must go back to their own sound arts to revive their culture. So they must learn to play the ʿūd and ṭunbūr.[8]

This bizarre logic started with an innocent plea to revive the culture and go back to the roots, but before we knew it the ʿūd and ṭunbūr had been brought to the stage. The landscape of music-in-Islām discussion is littered with such absurdities.

The next argument advanced today is for the noble goal of saving the youth from the Western culture.

Saving the Youth

The defense that many Muslim music enthusiasts find irresistible is that we need it to save the youth. The following comments from a blog say it eloquently: "For many people it is hard to get rid of music in their life right away, so nashīds have become an alternative for many confused young Muslims. They act as a bridge from the ḥarām to the ḥalāl." The term "nashīd" is used here very loosely, including within it all instrumental and vocal affairs performed in mixed gatherings of young men and women under the banner of Islāmic music. So the assertion that the bridge is between ḥalāl and ḥarām is questionable. Further, there is no explanation of how we can be assured that the bridge will allow only one-way traffic.

It is interesting that in the historical debate on music within Islām, such an argument could never be advanced. In the discussions of Sufi masters we have seen that they prohibited it for the novices precisely because they had not liberated themselves from carnal desires. Samāʿ was never advocated as a means of weaning the audiences off the sensuous music. Rather the admission that one had to be weaned would be sufficient ground for disqualifying him or her from listening to samāʿ.

However the argument was used in Christianity. In fact most corruptions in Christianity can be traced to some variant of this argument. In its celebrations and acts of worship it tried to accommodate pagan ideas and ideals by producing compromise solutions. The same is true about music. In the preface to one of his first hymnbooks Luther remarks that the songs in this collection were arranged "to give the young—who should at any rate be trained in music and other fine arts—something to wean them away from love ballads and carnal songs and to teach them something of value in their place."[9] That argument has never ceased to appeal to the Christian world. One Christian commentator tells about a Virginian Presbyterian church, whose "saintly pastor" introduced an organ in the church on the grounds that "it would be advantageous to prevent his young people from leaving his church to run after the Episcopal organ in the city."[10] Competition with rival churches accelerated the adoption of music in the church. Where that has led can be seen in the section on the church and the instrument debate in chapter 4.

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[8] Al-Faruqi, "Problems of Music Education," 9–10.

Islām did not prescribe this approach. There is nothing that the proponents of music can show in Islāmic source texts to substantiate this use of music. The challenge was there but Islām dealt with it in its own way. Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith represented the incursion of the advanced civilizations of the time into the Islāmic world. Never once did Islām ask its followers to counter the threat by producing Islāmic music. It allowed the use of poetry as a response; it did not encourage or permit the use of musical instruments or professional singing. Rather it condemned Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith for trying to lure people away from the truth of Allāh's Word and challenged everyone to listen to this message with the seriousness it deserves; it created an atmosphere in which his scheme failed miserably.

The idea that we can develop some musical nicotine patches that will help wean the addicts off their listening habit is appealing but the facts on the ground do not support it. In recent times Iran tried it. After the revolution it created an official Center for Islāmic Music to produce "good music" that would help wean the youth off the bad one. The experiment failed. Within one year of Khomeini's edict prohibiting music, a process of reversal was set into motion. In a short span the revolutionary fervor was gone and Iranian youth were busy listening to Western music.[11] The reason may be that those who are used to hard liquor and see nothing wrong with it may not be satisfied by a soft substitute. The substitute only reminds one of, and intensifies the desire for, the real thing. The so-called bridge from ḥarām to ḥalāl allows two-way traffic. In fact there is more traffic toward what even the proponents of this argument recognize as ḥarām. And there should be no illusions about the destination of those who go with the flow.

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[9] *Luther's Works*, preface to the *Wittenberg Hymnal* (1524), 53:316.

[10] Robert L. Dabney, "Review of Dr. Girardeau's 'Instrumental Music in the Public Worship of the Church,'" *The Blue Banner*, vol. 3, no. 1–2, Jan/Feb 1994, http://www.fpcr.org/blue_banner_articles/org10.htm.

The Nashīd Artists

The idea that you need good music to drive out bad music has created a huge market for the nashīd artists, worth billions of dollars worldwide. There is room for nashīds when they are restricted to plain singing of good texts without any musical instruments and are performed in wholesome Islāmic environments. (See appendix 1 for Islāmic rulings on nashīds). But more often people engaged in this enterprise are putting a ḥalāl label on popular music. They know that popular music sells and it sells even more in their niche market when it has the ḥalāl label on it. What is good about their music remains as nebulous as the dust clouds generated by the taghbīr artists of a distant past. Imām Shafiʿī said, "I left Baghdād where the heretics had invented something they called taghbīr. They used it to keep people away from the Qur'ān." They would sing and dance to songs with religious themes, all the while striking a pillow or leather to produce a rhythm. The performance was called taghbīr (from *ghubār*, meaning "dust") because their dancing would raise dust clouds.[12] Their performances were in the "open air theater" and admission was free. Of course, they would begin with a recitation from the Qur'ān. And they claimed that they wished to instill the remembrance of the Hereafter in the minds of their audiences. But leading scholars would not hear of it. Imām Shafiʿī called them heretics.[13] Yazīd ibn Hārūn, a great Imām of this time, said only the debauched did it.[14] When Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was asked about taghbīr, he said, "It is an innovation. If you see one of those people on the road, take another road."[15]

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[11] On the other hand the Talibān may have been more successful in this regard. The unsophisticated Talibān had no understanding of or interest in developing centers for "Islāmic music." Interestingly despite the expected alienation of their peoples due to their much-publicized crude manners and severe repression they succeeded in banning music as long as they ruled. It is probably an indication of their resilience that unlike the Iranian revolution the Talibān revolution was not expected to crumble on its own. They had to be bombed out.

Fast forward to a typical Muslim youth concert in any Western country in the fifteenth/twenty-first century and you can witness another musical ceremony with the same good intentions—and questionable practices. This time it was a new Muslim journalist who raised her voice against it. She reported about an Islāmic charity concert in London in 2006 in which young and grown up women "squealed, shouted, swayed and danced" in response to the music as the stage managers urged them to get up and sing along.[16] Her criticism drew a response from the singer. Similarly when Yusuf Islām, who had given up music upon his acceptance of Islām, picked up his guitar after about three decades, there was no escaping the feeling of shock and dismay among many of his well-wishers. He too had to offer a defense of his action. That the musicians had to defend themselves was good. But the defense itself was not. Their arguments were slick nothings based on commonly held misconceptions.

They insisted that music was a controversial subject. In current discussions on music this has become a synonym for permissible. Since it is controversial you have no right to condemn it, claimed one of them. This should be contrasted with the words of Shaykh al-Suhrawardī, who after defending samāʿ advised everyone engaging in it to stay away from the duff, because it was safer to stay clear of controversies. Additionally there is a refusal here to see that only *some* music is controversial; most music is prohibited by a near consensus of the scholars. And the type of concert we are talking about, with a mixed gathering and use of musical instruments, falls within that agreed upon red zone.

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[12] Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qināʿ*, 54.

[13] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*, فصل قد أكمل الله تعالى الدين ولم يجعل فيه هذا السماع [Section: Allāh Perfected the Religion and did not include in it this samāʿ], 65.

[14] Ibid., 69.

[15] Ibid., 68.

[16] Yvonne Ridley, "Pop Culture in the Name of Islam," http://yvonneridley.org/yvonne-ridley/articles/pop-culture-in-the-name-of-islam.html, 24 April 2006.

There was a related call that "we should agree to disagree." This has become a cliché, repeated endlessly without any understanding. It sounds polite and civilized. But this great-sounding principle, like all principles, has its scope that has been delineated by the great authorities in Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and Fiqh. There are issues on which we should agree to disagree. This includes many differences in the details of Islāmic law among the various schools (e.g. regarding methods of offering ṣalāh) and no one has a right to condemn the other owing to these differences. But not every issue can claim immunity from censure and reprimand on this ground. As we see in the timeline of books on music (appendix 2), in all generations prominent scholars have condemned music (ghinā' and malāhī) in no uncertain terms. When the great majority of authorities have *agreed to condemn* something, it is not polite or right to ask to *agree to disagree* on it.

The power of music was also used as a justification for its use. We must use it for *daʿwah* (inviting people to Islām), the argument went. Another justification cited was the successful use of music for charitable fund raising. Daʿwah and charity are important Islāmic duties. But what kind of a daʿwah is it that makes hijab clad young Muslim women shout, sway, and dance in public? If the tool is not giving the right message even to Muslims, how can it be expected to give it to non-Muslims? And since when did Islām require us to employ musical entertainment to do daʿwah or promote charity? The message of Islām is a very serious message. We have to make sure that it is not distorted or compromised by the medium we choose for delivering it. The same is true of charity. People can and do give tips when they are pleased with the performance of an entertainer. But such giving has nothing to do with Islāmic charity, which is giving in the path of Allāh, not in the path of self-gratification. By ignoring this crucial difference some Islāmic charities have become a major source of promoting music in the Muslim communities in the West.

Today using such concerts for even apparently noble purposes is problematic for an additional reason. Their meaning and message is determined not just by the stated purposes but by the larger cultural current with which they are seeking "positive integration." The dancing hijab-clad girls gave a big clue that we can ignore or deny only at our peril. The song may be about Islāmic beliefs or the plight of the Palestinians, but the audiences may be thinking of how cute the singer is. The whole concert environment and pre-concert publicity also highlights that. Further the demands of the music business transform a person. We saw that in the story of Umm Kulthūm.

Yet another argument claimed cultural relativism to be an Islāmic creed. Islām's waters have no color of their own, it announced; they take on the color of the native culture in every land. So it is fine if they take on the color of pop culture in the West, it seemed to suggest. With this supra argument we can settle a lot of debates about ḥalāl and ḥarām, without even a need for consulting Islāmic teachings on the subject. Islām is just a colorless, tasteless, odorless liquid that can take the shape, color, taste, and odor of wherever it happens to be. The singer offering this defense did not realize that if that were so, the world would not need Islām since Islām then would have nothing to offer. The fact is that Islām does have a unique worldview, a role model, and a code of life that colors every detail of a Muslim's life. It was the Jews in Madīnah who tried to make fun of the fact that the Messenger ﷺ taught the Muslims everything and it was a Companion who understood the implications and answered, yes, he even taught us how to clean ourselves after visiting the bathroom.

Some cultural diversity does exist within Islāmic lands, but the space for this diversity is allocated and controlled by Islām. An American Muslim poet can compose his poems in English and an

Arab poet in Arabic, each using the meters appropriate to their language. But both are subject to the same requirements regarding the content of their poetry and the manner of its recitation. The rules governing the permissible and the prohibited are the same everywhere. For example, a musical instrument causing ṭarab is prohibited everywhere. Hijab is required everywhere. Free mixing of men and women is prohibited everywhere. These are the colors of Islām. Whether in the remote parts of Africa or on the main streets of America, a Muslim is recognizable by the colors of Islām. The colorless, tasteless, odorless fluid is not Islām, even though it may be cleverly marketed as crystal clear water.

Ironically one defender even quoted Ibn Qayyim as a supporter of cultural relativism and therefore of this music. Probably no one told him that Ibn Qayyim wrote at length denouncing music in the strongest possible language.

The saddest part in the entire episode was that there was no realization or admission that there was something wrong. "Do not judge the sisters," was the rejoinder. They were just showing their love of God. Besides, they had just raised 100,000 pounds for charity. (It is interesting how the credit goes not to the donors but those who somehow extracted the money from them). Incidentally this last act must be considered as going the extra mile, since the responses also pointed out that concern for other Muslims was not the primary purpose of religion (Yvonne Ridley had questioned their dancing when the Ummah was bleeding) and Muslims were not "required to live in perpetual grieving and lamenting." This hardening of hearts, this failure to repent, this insistence on a wrong—these are indeed the diseases that we had been warned about as likely outcomes of indulgence in music.

Islām teaches us that not only our goals but also our means must be good and legitimate if they have to produce any worthwhile results here and carry any weight in the Hereafter. For example attaining peace in the world is an important Islāmic goal but Islām does not teach us that peace will come by singing peace songs with beautiful music. In an Arabia chronically submerged in tribal wars and highway robberies, Islām brought an unprecedented peace, whereby a lone old woman could travel from Yemen to Makkah without any fear on the way. This peace was not achieved through peace songs.

A related argument has been advanced by some in the hip-hop movement in the US, claiming it to be an instrument for political emancipation and fighting Islamophobia. It is claimed that hiphop artists are indigenous as is the medium, so their music cannot be brushed aside as foreign. Naeem Mohaiemen writes, "When rappers rhyme over the azaan or Quranic ayaats, mainstream society's perceptions of an 'alien' religion are flipped. Enhanced visibility through music can create a dynamic that moves America from hyper-Islamophobia to a dialogue among equals."[17] Unfortunately, his preoccupation with the political implications does not let him realize the tremendous violence done to the *adhān* and the Qur'ān when rappers rhyme over them.

A lot of what is offered today in "Islāmic" concerts or through music recordings is a weapon of mass distraction, although it may create illusions of virtue. The illusion becomes even more formidable when accompanied by fame and fortune. The discussion about the charity concert highlighted that. It also highlighted the pressures Muslims are facing for conformance to the pop culture.

The overwhelming presence of music in the society and our adjustment to it can be gauged by another disturbing trend. The conceptual corruption caused by mixing music with Qur'ānic recitation reflected itself in the *handasah al-ṣawt* approach. Its practical manifestation is *talḥīn*. We end this chapter with a discussion of that.

Music and the Qur'ānic Recitation

The recitation of the inimitable words of the Qur'ān has always been an unmatched moving experience for countless people who have turned their attention to it. It makes people's hearts tremble with the awe and fear of Allāh. It causes them to cry. It forces them to fall in prostration. A good voice and command over the rules of *tajwīd* enhance these effects. At the same time there has always been a possibility that some people will get carried away and cross the barrier between Qur'ānic recitation and *talḥīn*, or singing. Thus scholars have always been cautioning us against it. They have been pointing out that while the Qur'ān does command its readers to recite it with *tartīl*, that should not be translated into talḥīn. *Tartīl* means reading it slowly, pronouncing every word clearly, following the rules of *tajwīd*, and reflecting on it. It leads to the fear of Allāh. *Talḥīn*, on the other hand, aims at enjoyment and entertainment. The two are not only different but are mutually exclusive. As Qārī ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (d. 1408/1988) points out one can follow either the rules of *tajwīd* or those of *talḥīn*:

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[17] Mohaiemen, "Fear of a Muslim Planet: Hip-Hop's Hidden History," 334.

> When a person attempts to follow the rules of music for any musical note in the recitation of a Qur'ānic verse, it is a given that he will violate the rules of *tajwīd*. And if he decides to follow the rules of *tajwīd*, it is a given that he will violate the rules of music.[18]

Shaykh Muḥammad Khāṭir (d. 1416/1995), the late Mufti of Egypt, explains why *talḥīn* is so problematic. It works at cross purposes to the Qur'ān: "*Talḥīn* distorts the words of the Qur'ān, negates their purpose, and turns people away from reflecting on its verses, to focusing on the intonation that accompanies it."[19] The musical tones become a replacement for the Words they are supposed to embellish. *Talḥīn* is thus a virtual addition to the text as Shaykh Khalīl Maḥmūd al-Ḥuṣarī points out: "*Tajwīd* spurts from the Qur'ān and *talḥīn* is an addition to it. If we were to permit it, then adding words to the Qur'ān will also be permissible."[20] The whole discussion has been summarized beautifully and eloquently by Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Shaʿrānī in a Sufi pledge:

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[18] Qārī ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ʿAbd al-Ṣamad, quoted in al-ʿĀmilī, *Al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 188.

[19] Shaykh Muḥammad Khāṭir, Mufti of Egypt, quoted in al-ʿĀmilī, *Al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 182–83.

[20] Shaykh Khalīl Maḥmūd al-Ḥuṣarī, quoted in al-ʿĀmilī, *Al-Ghinā' fī 'l-Islām*, 183.

> To those of our friends who would listen to us we should stop them from reciting the Qur'ān in modes that are against the rules delineated by the pious predecessors. This also applies to giving the *adhān* and saying the *takbīr*[21] behind the imām.[22]

He explains that it violates the rules of *tajwīd* and is ḥarām. He then points out why *talḥīn* destroys an act of worship.

> When the imām focuses on modes and singing, then he loses consciousness of being in the presence of Allāh; the thing that is most important in ṣalāh is lost . . . When the Prophet ﷺ said, "Beautify the Qur'ān with your voice," it meant pronouncing every letter properly and beautifully, as is the practice of the masters of recitation. It did not mean singing in the manner of love songs.[23]

The Qur'ānic recitation is a serious act of worship and devotion; it is not for entertainment. Like all other acts of worship it must follow the way prescribed by the Sharī'ah. A *qārī* must recite the Qur'ān the way its recitation has been received by disciples from their teachers all through the centuries, which was free of *talḥīn*.[24] This is necessary not only for preserving the purity of worship, but it also has had other great blessings associated with it. Just as the Qur'ān is the great unifying Book for the Ummah, its recitation has also been a tremendously unifying act. No matter where a *qārī* comes from and whether or not he can speak a word of Arabic in normal conversation, his recitation will faithfully copy the approved recitation as preserved in both books of *tajwīd* and an unshakable oral tradition.

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[21] This refers to the arrangement in large congregations before the advent of loud speakers. The designated repeaters throughout the congregation would repeat the takbīr of the imām to signal transition to the next ṣalāh position. The same system is used today if the speakers fail during the ṣalāh and as a precaution in the ṣalāh at the Ḥaram.

[22] 'Uthmānī, trans., *Ham Say 'Ahd Liyā Giyā*, pledge 142, pp. 322–23.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Abū 'l-'Abbās al-Qurṭubī, *Kashf al-Qinā'*, 113. He writes that there is nothing in the continuously reported modes of Qur'ānic recitation that resembles *talḥīn*.

However today the pressures built by the prevalence of music are changing that. In Egypt, for example, there has been a visible and disturbing move toward unifying Qur'ānic recitation with music. Nelson mentions a musician Zakariyyā Aḥmad who planned to compose music for the Qur'ān with the aim of evoking the meanings. He built his case by giving an example. Once he heard a reciter, "who evoked such a temptingly beautiful image of Hell-fire" that he burst out: "If Hell is so lovely and pleasant, take me to it."[25] This response speaks volumes about the mindset of the musician. For at that time the qārī was reciting the following verses describing the torments of Hell that ought to make one tremble with fear:

> And what can let you know what *Saqar* is? It neither spares (anything inside it from burning) nor leaves (any disbeliever outside). It will disfigure the skins. Appointed over it are nineteen wardens.[26]

A person who finds this attractive is of course not listening to the words, only to the sounds, through his thoroughly distorted hearing. This is what Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā' lamented about the new Qur'ānic recitation scene in Egypt. He said:

> What are we witnessing in Egypt today in the gatherings of people around a qārī who engages in *talḥīn*? What we hear from the shouts and noises asking for a repetition affirms that these masses are not asking for a repeat of and are not delighted with anything but music and singing. As for the Qur'ān, they are totally isolated from it. They scream with delight equally when they hear the verses of admonishment or the verses of reward. They make no difference between the verses talking about Hell and those talking about Heaven. In this act there is such disrespect for the Qur'ān that calls for prohibition of such listening and attendance of such gatherings.[27]

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[25] Zakariyyā Aḥmad, quoted in Nelson, *The Art of Reciting the Qur'ān*, 65.

[26] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Muddath-thir 74:28–30.

[27] Shaykh ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā' in the introduction to al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, 19.

This is the result of merging music with the Qur'ānic recitation.

This brief survey barely outlines our plight. Our resistance to music has dropped to an all-time low. The greatest attraction in many large Islāmic conferences in the US and Europe is the music and entertainment program. And while our acts of worship are still safe from its intrusion, our places of worship are not. Through the ubiquitous mobile phone with its blaring musical ring tones, even the holiest of our places of worship are profaned recklessly. How many times have we seen music from a mobile phone competing with the recitation from the imām during congregational ṣalāh? We can probably get an idea of the enormity of this situation by recalling that Islām did not allow us to walk closely in front of a praying person so as not to disturb his concentration. A ḥadīth told us that if a person knew the punishment for it in the Hereafter, he would rather wait for forty years for the praying person to finish. A person is not even allowed to read the Qur'ān loudly when his recitation would interfere with someone's ṣalāh.

What a change. Where no disturbance is allowed, we witness it being caused routinely by the most profane means. Yet we do not think much of it.

In this discussion we have not even talked about what everyone agrees is the bad music, the music filled with devilish messages of violence, sex, drugs, and defiance of all authority that are corrupting the young minds of the planet earth. This universal menace has made inroads into Muslim societies as well, with devastating results.

It is obvious that the great majority of us has fallen off the slippery stone. Realizing that is the first step towards recovery. We talk about that in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 12

BEYOND THE DEBATE

THE ISSUE OF MUSIC IS NOT ONE OF ACADEMIC INTEREST only. It concerns our life in these turbulent times and therefore we need to go beyond the debates and seek sincere advice from trusted authorities and respected well-wishers.

The advice from ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه is especially relevant for the person facing the enticements of the pop culture. For the youth today, especially those growing in the West, peer pressure is huge. They are under a tremendous push to assimilate, blend in, do in Rome as the Romans do. (Their contemporaries in other parts of the world are not safe either because globalization means Rome is everywhere). There is hardly a sin that attracts teenagers—drugs, violence, lewdness, fornication, gangs, music—that does not have peer pressure as its driving factor. While the pressure is new, the mentality that gives in to it is not. Ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه addressed that mentality when he reminded that giving in to peer pressure is not the way of a Muslim. He said, "Do not be a crowd follower." When asked who was a crowd follower, he replied: "He is the one who says I am with the people. If they follow the right path so will I. If they go astray so will I."[1] This herd mentality does not befit a believer. A Muslim's moral compass does not swerve with the flurry of each new trend. He is resolute; his actions determined by what is right and wrong, not what makes it easier to get along. He lives in a different world, seeking the pleasure and fearing the wrath of the Creator, not the creations. He keeps his eyes on the eternal happiness, not the fleeting pleasures of this world.

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[1] ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd in *al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr lil-Ṭabarānī*, no. 8765, 9:166–67.

Another advice comes from Imām Ghazālī in response to a query from a disciple. After spending years with him, studying and mastering various religious sciences, the disciple sought practical guidance that would really matter in the Hereafter. What he had learned in all that studying was great, academically and intellectually. Now he wanted guidance on navigating his way through all this knowledge; a few words of advice that he could live by, that would point to the knowledge "that would be of use to him on the morrow and give him company in the grave." In response Imām Ghazālī wrote the *Letter to a Disciple*, a heart-to-heart talk from an experienced Sufi master to a sincere seeker. Probably one of the last works done by Ghazālī, every word of this Sufi letter is worth savoring and pondering.

Imām Ghazālī first reminds the disciple that it is an indication of Allāh's turning away from His servant that the latter should busy himself with vain things. He stresses the value of time: "If an hour of a man's life slips by in other than the worship for which he was created, then it is proper that his grief over that be protracted." He warns that the advice to be offered will be difficult to accept for those who pursue vain pleasures as forbidden things are dear to their hearts. Then he emphasizes the need for action because mere knowledge will be of no use. "Even if you studied for a hundred years and collected a thousand books, you would not be qualified for the mercy of Allāh, Most High, except through deeds."[2] A person will enter Paradise through the mercy of Allāh, but it will be his acts of obedience and worship that will qualify him for that mercy. Then he specifies the important acts and behaviors.

This is a post-*Iḥyā'* Sufi letter pointing out the most important things in the life of a Sufi in particular but a believer in general.

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[2] Al-Ghazālī, *Letter to a Disciple*, 9.

Significantly, the only reference it makes to sound is the mention of the ḥadīth that says three sounds are blessed: the cock's crow (it worked as an alarm clock waking up people in the early morning), the sound of Qur'ānic recitation, and the voice of those seeking forgiveness from Allāh in the early hours of the morning.[3] There is no mention of the Sufi samāʿ in the entire letter. The samāʿ that *Iḥyā'* justified (and even with all the restrictions that is all it justified) is not that important after all. But staying away from vain pleasures is.

Once we sincerely pay heed to such advice, the music issue may become easy to sort out. While the great majority of scholars declare prohibition, even the handful who do not agree with a consensus on this issue, like al-Shawkānī, conclude that it is best to abstain:

> After all the arguments are considered, it is obvious that even if the object of dispute (music) is cleared of a judgment of prohibition, it is not cleared of doubt. And believers are the ones who stop in the face of doubt as made clear by the ḥadīth: "Whoever stayed clear of it protected his honor and his religion. And whoever wanders around a preserve is likely to fall into it."[4]

He is referring to the famous ḥadīth, considered as one of the pivotal aḥādīth in Islāmic teachings, which says:

> الْحَلَالُ بَيِّنٌ وَالْحَرَامُ بَيِّنٌ وَبَيْنَهُمَا مُشَبَّهَاتٌ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا كَثِيرٌ مِنْ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ اتَّقَى الْمُشَبَّهَاتِ اسْتَبْرَأَ لِدِينِهِ وَعِرْضِهِ وَمَنْ وَقَعَ فِي الشُّبُهَاتِ كَرَاعٍ يَرْعَى حَوْلَ الْحِمَى يُوشِكُ أَنْ يُوَاقِعَهُ أَلَا وَإِنَّ لِكُلِّ مَلِكٍ حِمًى أَلَا إِنَّ حِمَى اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ مَحَارِمُهُ
>
> Ḥalāl is clear and ḥarām is clear and in between them there are doubtful things. Most of the people have no knowledge about them. So whoever saves himself from these suspicious things

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[3] Ibid., 20.

[4] Al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awṭār*, كتاب السبق والرمي، ٨- باب ما جاء في آلة اللهو [Book: Competitive running and throwing, Chapter: 8 – Regarding Instruments of Diversion], commentary of ḥadīth no. 3565.

> saves his religion and his honor. And whoever indulges in these suspicious things is like a shepherd who grazes his animals near the private pasture of someone else; at any moment he is liable to step in it. Beware! Every king has a private pasture and the private pasture of Allāh on earth is the things He has declared forbidden.[5]

His additional caution comes at the end of his book on samāʿ. After discussing the differences of opinion on the subject he reminds his readers that singing remains dangerous, especially with the deterioration of society:

> Many a time singing as we have described is one of the greatest traps of the cursed, the wicked one (i.e. the Shayṭān)—especially for the one living in these bad times, for his *nafs* is naturally inclined to the worldly pleasures.[6]

Similarly Shaykh ʿAlī al-Ṭantāwī (d. 1420/1999) writes that most contemporary music is certainly prohibited for several reasons:

> There is no doubt that in [their present] form these [music and singing] are mostly prohibited because they accompany prohibited things, lead to other prohibited things, distract from obligations, and waste money.[7]

He adds that there is little room for it in present circumstances, regardless of one's opinion about music: "Opening schools for education and preparing armies for defense have a higher priority than entertainment and singing."[8]

Today our priorities have been inverted and the last chapter highlighted the lows to which we have descended as a result.

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5. Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. كتاب الإيمان ، باب فضل من استبرأ لدينه [Book: Faith, Chapter: Merit of the one who seeks blamelessness for his religion], no. 52.
6. Al-Shawkānī, *Ibṭāl Daʿwā ʾl-Ijmāʿ ʿalā Taḥrīm Muṭlaq al-Samāʿ*, quoted in Al-Marʿashlī, *al-Ghinā' wa ʾl-Maʿāzif*, 106.
7. Al-Ṭantāwī, *al-Fatāwā*, 110–11.
8. Ibid.

Once we realize the full significance of that fall, there will be no way but up from there on. There are episodes in Islāmic history where taking a U-turn on the issue of music was the beginning of a turnaround in a person's life. The great Sufi, mujāhid, and Ḥadīth, tafsīr, and fiqh scholar ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797) was merely a rich, spoiled youth occupied in the charms of musical instruments and other pleasures. Then a time came when he was revered for his piety, character, and scholarship, so much so that when he entered Baghdād the entire city came to receive him. From a secluded quarter in his palace, Hārūn al-Rashīd heard the clamor and saw the extraordinary dust clouds raised by the welcome throngs who had gathered spontaneously and realized that while he held the political power, it was Ibn al-Mubārak who ruled over hearts of the people.

ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak's life changed on a day that had started as one of his normal fun filled days. As he was busy seeking the usual pleasures, he heard a voice reciting the Qur'ānic verse,

أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا۟ أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ ٱلْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا۟
كَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ مِن قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۖ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ
فَـٰسِقُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

> Is it not time that the hearts of those who believe should be humbled to the Remembrance of Allāh and the Truth that has descended (through revelation), and that they should not be like those to whom the Book was given before, and whose hearts hardened with the passing of time. For many among them are rebellious transgressors.[9]

It hit him with such force that he cried out, "Yes, my Lord, it is time." He broke his ʿūd—his instrument of diversion—and started on a new journey, one that turned him into one of the most respected names in Islāmic history.

Is it time for us?

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[9] *Al-Qur'ān*, al-Ḥadīd 57:16.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1

RULINGS ON *NASHĪDS*

ISLĀMIC *NASHĪDS* HAVE GAINED TREMENDOUSLY IN popularity in the last couple of decades. They are considered by many to be an effective answer to the onslaught of music we witness today. However, they also have the potential of going the way of the samāʿ—turning into a thinly veiled version of pop culture. This concern is evident in the contemporary discussions of the ʿulamā. Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn traces their evolution in this direction:

> When they first appeared there was no problem with them. There was no use of duffs in them. There was no seduction (*fitnah*) in their performance. They were not patterned after the tunes of the prohibited songs. Then they evolved and one could hear a sound that might or might not be from a duff. They also started using beautiful seducing voices. Their performance also acquired the attributes of prohibited songs.[1]

The same observation is made by al-Albānī who reports in his *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab* how a popular singer in Syria went from plain singing to the use of duffs. He also notes that many Islāmic nashīds are nowadays patterned after the tunes of secular sensual songs. Their objective is entertainment and enchantment and not the nashīd itself. He points out that in this there is imitation of the non-believers and the lewd people.[2]

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[1] Compiled by ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad, "Ḥukm al-Anāshīd al-Islāmiyyah", Ṣayd al-Fawā'id, http://saaid.net/fatwa/f46.htm.

On the other hand there is a useful role for Islāmic nashīds when used correctly. Thus the ruling depends upon their content and manner. A good poem sung without musical instruments in a wholesome environment—with no imitation of secular tunes and no free-mixing of men and women—is permissible.

A fatwa issued with the concurrence of Mufti Taqi Usmani distances Islāmic nashīds from musical performances by declaring that it is not permissible to learn and develop expertise in music for the purpose of producing nashīds. It enumerates the following conditions for nashīds to be permissible:[3]

- The content being sung consists of wholesome and virtuous subject matter and is free of apostasy, polytheism, and incitement to sin.[4]
- No musical instruments or prohibited musical tunes are used. The singer does not follow the rules of music. He only provides a simple recital with a good voice.
- In the gathering there is no mixing of men and women.
- The purpose is not mere entertainment and killing time.
- It does not lead to distraction from discharge of one's religious obligations.

Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Bāz also emphasizes the nature of the content as well as the gathering in determining permissibility:

> Islāmic nashīds are of various types. If (a nashīd) is sound and contains nothing but call and reminder for good and obedience to Allāh and His Messenger ﷺ, or for defending the lands against the plots of the enemies and things of that nature then there is nothing wrong with it. However, if it involves something

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[2] Al-Albānī, *Taḥrīm Ālāt al-Ṭarab*, 181.

[3] The fatwa was issued by Dār al-Iftā of Darul Uloom Karachi on 3 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1429 / 12 March 2008 in response to a query by the author.

[4] This is emphasized here because sometimes even eulogies may contain objectionable content including polytheism and apostasy.

> else like an invitation to sin, or mixing of men and women . . . or any other corruption then it is not permissible.[5]

Shaykh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn says that to be permissible, one's singing must be free of the use of instruments and musical tunes of secular songs:

> If it employs duffs, or beautiful seductive voices have been selected for it, or if it is performed in the tunes of the lowly songs then it is not permissible to listen to it.[6]

Such caution is necessary because of a huge tendency these days toward this behavior. What al-Albanī had reported about the transformation from plain singing of a Syrian *munshid* was hardly an isolated incident. Today such drift to secular music is visible even in the nashīds of some of those who came from a musical background, repented, abandoned music business, and then started producing nashīds. Market pressures and old habits combine to produce the equivalent of *nabīdh* (date-water drink) that has fermented into alcohol yet everyone keeps on maintaining the illusion that it is the same ḥalāl product that it once was.

These observations also help us understand the Islāmic view of beatboxing, the practice of producing instrumental sounds using vocal cords. Separate vocalists are assigned to produce the background instrument sounds to support the main singer. Some experts in beatboxing can even create acoustical illusions so one hears the sounds of drums and singing as coming from two different sources while in reality they are all being produced by the same singer. In either case, while the performance is free of instruments, it is not free of instrument sounds. In fact these "human orchestras" take pride in producing sounds indistinguishable from those of the real orchestras. And what is a musical performance but the production of sounds? The beatboxing sounds lead to the same ṭarab which is the real object of performance and the reason for prohibition. Obviously, the issue of imitation of professional music practices is also fully present. Anyone who longs for them might also consider consuming imitation bacon bits (made from vegetable sources) and the so-called ḥalāl beer. Their ingredients may be ḥalāl but the desire for the products being imitated is certainly not. The whole enterprise reminds one of the lemonade in a wine drinking party that Imām Ghazālī declared ḥarām. In fact it is worse since here we are dealing not with lemonade but a chemically produced drink, which aims at matching the hard drink in taste and effects.

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[5] Compiled by ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad, "Ḥukm al-Anāshīd al-Islāmiyyah", Ṣayd al-Fawā'id, http://saaid.net/fatwa/f46.htm.

[6] Ibid.

A second, and equally important, concern is the extent of one's involvement in them. There is a remarkable consensus that even the permissible nashīds are permissible only within limits. One's excessive involvement in them is not justifiable.

All of this is summarized in the statement of the Standing Committee for Fatwa of Saudi Arabia which says:

> It is permissible for you to seek a substitute for these (prohibited) songs in the Islāmic nashīds, which contain wisdom, admonishment, and lessons which arouse enthusiasm and sense of honor for the religion, stir Islāmic sentiments, and repulse one from evil and its motives so that the singer and the listener are propelled toward Allāh's obedience and away from His disobedience. However one should not make it a *wird* (regular practice followed religiously like the reading of a set part of the Qur'ān daily). One should not make it a habit. Rather it can be done from time to time when there is an appropriate reason for it like a wedding or journey for jihād and the like, or to create excitement for doing good when one is feeling slackness . . . (However) better than that is that one chooses a part of the Qur'ān and the invocations of the Prophet ﷺ to read . . .
>
> It was the practice of the Companions to focus on the Qur'ān and Sunnah. With that they also chanted nashīds and ḥudā', for example while digging the trench and building the Masjid or journeying for jihād. But they did not make that as their motto.[7]

In other words, we can occasionally enjoy wholesome Islāmic nashīds but must never forget the slippery stone.

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[7] Ibid.

APPENDIX 2

THE MUSIC DEBATE IN HISTORY

A HISTORY OF CONDEMNATION

The following is a representative list of the books, in chronological order, that were written to emphasize the prohibition of music.

1. *Dhamm al-Malāhī* (Censure of Musical Instruments) / Ibn Abī 'l-Dunyā (ʻAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʻUbayd ibn Sufyān), d. 281/894.

Dhamm al-Malāhī is the earliest book available on music. It is a small book; the edition printed by Dār al-Iʻtiṣām with the research and footnotes of Muḥammad ʻAbd al-Qādir ʻAṭā' consists of sixty-two pages, with thirty-two devoted to the actual book. It contains seventy-five reports from the Prophet ﷺ, his Companions and Successors, of which thirty-nine condemn musical instruments, listening to songstresses, and ghinā', while others deal with chess, backgammon, playing with pigeons, and homosexuality.

2. *Aḥkām al-Malāhī* (Ruling on Instruments of Diversion) / Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn Jaʻfar ibn al-Munādī, d. 336/947.

Ibn Qayyim has referred to this book in his *Ighāthat al-Lahfān.*

3. *Taḥrīm al-Nard wa 'l-Shaṭranj wa 'l-Malāhī* (Prohibition of Backgammon, Chess, and Instruments of Diversion) / Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ājurrī, d. 360/970.

This book is a comprehensive treatment of music, chess, backgammon, and other pastimes. One section is devoted to aḥādith dealing with permissible recreational activities like running, horse racing, archery and other physical exercises. One section presents the commentaries of Companions and Successors on the verse of Sūrah Luqmān. Another discusses the views of imāms of fiqh. Aḥādith condemning music are discussed in detail as are those showing permissibility of duff in weddings. It contains a survey of the general condemnation of musical instruments by prominent authorities. An edition of this book was published from manuscript by the publications department of the Idārat al-ʿIlmiyyah wa 'l-Iftā' wa 'l-Daʿwah wa 'l-Irshād (Department for Academic Research, Islāmic Law, Call and Guidance) of the Saudi government in 1402/1982.

4. *Al-Radd ʿalā Man Yuḥibb al-Samāʿ* (Refutation of the one who loves Samāʿ) / Al-Qāḍī Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī al-Shāfiʿī, d. 450/1058.

Qāḍī Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī was a famous Shāfiʿī scholar whose views against music have been quoted by Imām Ghazālī, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn al-Jawzī and others. This book was printed from manuscript by Dār al-Ṣaḥābah lil-Turāth in Tanta, Egypt in 1410/1990. Contents include statements of Imām Shāfiʿī, Imām Mālik, and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah; answers to misgivings of the lovers of ghinā' and evidence from the Qur'ān and Sunnah to clarify them; and statements of the Companions and Successors.

5. *Jawāb fī 'l-Samāʿ* (Response to Samāʿ) / Al-Qāḍī Abū 'l-Ṭayyib al-Ṭabarī al-Shāfiʿī, d. 450/1058.

This book was printed from manuscript in Syria in 1992 AC. Most probably it is the same book as the one listed above. (I was not able to get the book or a detailed description of it to confirm this.)

6. *Risālah fī Taḥrīm al-Samāʿ* (Epistle on Prohibition of Samāʿ) / Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd al-Ṭurtūshī, d. 520/1126.

Abū Bakr al-Ṭurtūshī was a prominent Mālikī scholar from al-Andalus. As this epistle shows he is strongly opposed to music. In the introduction he writes:

> In the past people used to hide their sins and repent. Later, as ignorance spread, people started committing sins openly. Then the situation worsened to such an extent that some people from our Muslim brothers, who were seduced by Shayṭān, became engrossed in the love of singing and musical instruments and considered it a means of getting closer to Allāh.[1]

The book is in two parts. The first part is devoted to ghināʾ and the second to Sufi samāʿ. In the second part he also quotes the opposition to samāʿ from prominent Sufi masters.

7. *Talbīs Iblīs* (Iblīs' Deception) / ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Jawzī, d. 597/1200.

Talbīs Iblīs is a very popular book that has been translated into many languages and continues to be read today. It shows Ibn al-Jawzī's great understanding and insights into the problems of all segments of the society. With great dexterity he exposes their rationalizations and shows how their behavior is at variance with the true teachings of Islām. The book contains thirteen chapters. The first five are general while the last eight deal with the deception of Iblīs for particular groups of people. The tenth chapter deals with the Sufis and covers the issue of samāʿ, dance, and ecstasy.

He reminds the Sufis, who claim that different rules apply to them, that human beings are all alike. If a healthy young man says that looking at beautiful women does not affect him, we will consider him a liar, because of what we know about human nature. Later on, he gives several examples of flimsy arguments in support of music like those given by Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī. After mentioning one such argument he comments, "I mentioned it to expose the level of his understanding and reasoning ability. Otherwise time is too precious to be wasted on this."

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[1] Al-Ṭurtūshī, *Kitāb Taḥrīm al-Ghināʾ*, 160.

The opinions of Imām Aḥmad, Imām Mālik, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Shāfiʿī are covered as well as the Qur'ānic verses, aḥādīth, and sayings of the Companions and Successors. There is an in-depth discussion of the Sufi arguments and a very solid rebuttal. At one place in the book he reminds his readers that the muftī is like a physician who must have an understanding of the condition of the patient before he prescribes anything to him. This is an apt description of Ibn al-Jawzī himself.

8. *Taḥrīm al-Yarāʿ* (Prohibition of Yarāʿ) / Abū 'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Zayd ibn Yāsīn al-Dawlaʿī, d. 598/1201.

9. *Risālah fī Dhamm al-Shabbābah, wa 'l-Raqṣ, wa 'l-Samāʿ* (Epistle on Censure of Flutes, Dance, and Samāʿ) / Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, d. 620/1223.

10. *Kashf al-Qināʿ ʿan Ḥukm al-Wajd wa 'l-Samāʿ* (Removal of the Veil in the Rule of Ecstasy and Samāʿ) / Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī (Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar al-Anṣārī), d. 656/1258.

As the title indicates, this book is an examination of the Sufi samāʿ and ecstasy. It presents the arguments for and against each practice and analyzes them in the light of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, in a highly academic and logical style.

According to Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī, ghinā' falls in two categories. First is the singing people do when working, carrying heavy loads, or traveling, to lessen the burden of these activities. This includes ḥudā', as well as singing of women to calm their little children. Such personal singing, when it is free of obscene or prohibited content is permissible without doubt. Sometimes it is even desirable as was the rajaz singing by the Companions during battles.

The second category consists of singing by professional singers who have mastered the art and can excite the emotions and create ṭarab. This has been declared prohibited by the majority of authorities while a couple of people declared it permissible. Al-Qurṭubī gives the arguments for prohibition based on the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth and examines objections to these arguments in detail. His conclusion is that the ṭarab-producing singing is prohibited. An edition of this book was published from manuscripts by the Saudi Arabian ministry of publications in 1411/1991.

11. Istiqṣā' al-Bayān fī Mas'alat al-Shādurwān (Thorough Exposition on the Question of [listening to] the Shādurwān) / Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī), d. 694/1294.

Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī was a Shāfiʿī jurist and Ḥadīth master from Makkah. He was also the Shaykh al-Ḥaram. He discusses a water fountain called the *shādurwān* that had been developed as a musical instrument. In this fountain, jets of water supported glass balls in continual motion, causing them to strike each other and produce musical sound. He explains why it was ḥarām.

12. Kitāb al-Ghinā' wa Taḥrīmuh (The Book on *Ghinā'* and its Prohibition) / Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ṭabarī al-Makkī), d. 694/1294.

13. Kitāb al-Bulghah wa 'l-Iqnāʿ fī Ḥall Shubhat Mas'alat al-Samāʿ (The Sufficient and Satisfying Book in Settling the Doubt on Samāʿ) / Al-Wāsiṭī (ʿImād al-Dīn Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Wāsiṭī al-Ḥanbalī), d. 711/1311.

14. Risālah fī 'l-Samāʿ wa'l-Raqṣ wa'l-Ṣurākh (Epistle on Samāʿ, Dancing, and Screaming) / Ibn Taymiyyah (Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm ibn ʿAbd al-Salām ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥarrānī al-Ḥanbalī), d. 728/1327.

Ibn Taymiyyah was a staunch opponent of ghinā'. His views have been recorded by al-Manbijī as well, as we shall see below.

15. Ḥurmat al-Samāʿ (Prohibition of Samāʿ) / Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr), d. 751/1350.

16. Madārij al-Sālikīn (Stages for the Seekers) / Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr), d. 751/1350.

Madārij al-Sālikīn is a detailed commentary on *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, a well-known Sufi manual by Shaykh al-Islām ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Anṣārī al-Harawī (d. 481/1089) who was a leading Ḥanbalī jurist and Sufi. Ibn Qayyim had a great respect for the earlier Sufi masters like Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803), Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859), al-Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867), Sahal al-Tusturī (d. 283/896), and Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. 298/910). But he was critical of later Sufis who deviated from the Sharīʿah .

In the section on samāʿ he lists three categories: 1) Loved and commanded by Allāh. This is samāʿ of (i.e. listening to) the Qur'ān. 2) Despised and prohibited. This is everything that is harmful for one's heart and religion. This is the prevalent ghinā' that creates enchantment. 3) Neutral or permissible.

This section also contains an eloquent rebuttal to Sufi arguments for samāʿ contained in the *Iḥyā'*.

17. Kashf al-Ghiṭā' ʿan Ḥukm Samāʿ al-Ghinā' (Removing the Veil from the Rule on Listening to Singing) / Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr), d. 751/1350.

Kashf al-Ghiṭā' is a very important historic document on the subject of ghinā' containing statements from seven scholars representing all four schools in response to a request for fatwa sent in 740 AH. The question began, "What do the leading scholars say regarding the samāʿ that consists of duff, shabbābah, and other musical instruments as well as clapping? Both men and women attend it, sometime resulting in mixing, some time women sitting opposite men and looking at them. They also dance to music." It also noted that some of the proponents claimed it was a sin that was wiped out through repentance, although they insisted on continuing it along with their utterance of the words of repentance.

Part 1 of the book contains short answers from the following scholars.

1. Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), a renowned master in principles of fiqh, Arabic grammar, tafsīr, and Ḥadīth. He authored about 150 books. He wrote:

> Samāʿ as described here is an evil and an innovation; it is an act of the ignorant and the devils. A group of scholars declared use of duff and shabbābah together as prohibited, while Shāfiʿī never declared it permissible. Presence of men and women together is an evil that deserves censure.

He further said that anyone who attributed such actions to the practice of the Prophet ﷺ deserved to be severely punished and listed as a liar.

As for the claim that samāʿ (literally: listening) brings one closer to Allāh, he said that it would be true if it meant listening to the Qur'ān, Sunnah, and stories of the pious but not for the kind of listening mentioned here.

2. Shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī (d. 745/1344)

3. Burhān al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Ḥanafī (d. 744/1343)
In addition to quoting relevant sections from the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, and statements of all four Imāms to show prohibition, he noted that the prohibition extended to the entire society. Since music affects the whole society, it is prohibited for everyone including the *dhimmī* minorities living within the Islāmic state. It quotes Imām Abū Yūsuf as having said: "The *dhimmīs* are prevented from (using and listening to) mazāmīr, ʿūd, ghinā', ṣanj, and drums."

4. Abū ʿUmar ibn Abū 'l-Walīd al-Mālikī—unknown.

5. ʿAbdullāh ibn Abū ʾl-Walīd al-Mālikī—unknown.

6. Sharaf al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥanbalī (b. 693/1293.)
In addition to agreeing with the previous answers, Shaykh Sharaf al-Dīn quoted two other scholars regarding the government's responsibility in this area: Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī said that these people had chosen a sin as a means of getting closer to Allāh and whoever does that should be expelled. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ said that it was the responsibility of the ruler to stop them.

7. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372)
Ibn Kathīr is the famous exegete and historian whose *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm* and *al-Bidāyah wa ʾl-Nihāyah* are well known. He wrote, "Using the instruments of ṭarab (enchantment) and listening to them is prohibited." He quoted the ḥadīth of Bukhārī, the verse of Sūrah Luqmān, and the statement of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd ﵁ that ghināʾ grows hypocrisy asserting that its attribution to Ibn Masʿūd ﵁ is sound.

He also mentioned the ḥadīth of Bukhārī about Eid day singing of the Abyssinians and noted that it was an exception for the Eid day. "No one has said that if they wanted to do it all the time that they would be permitted to do so."

He declared that considering such an activity a means of getting closer to Allāh was the greatest of evils and the biggest of innovations.

He concluded by reminding that whoever was moved by the singing of poetry and was not affected by listening to the Qurʾān was not on the right path. If he did not repent, he would be humiliated and disgraced on the Day of Judgment.

Part 2 of the book contains the answer from Ibn Qayyim. He first gave a short answer: "This samāʿ is prohibited and ugly. No one praises it except the one who is bereft of decency and religion."

His longer answer follows in two sections. In the first section Ibn Qayyim discusses the issue of samāʿ in the light of the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, and saying of the Companions, Successors, and other predecessors followed by a detailed examination of the Sufi samāʿ. In the second section he presents an innovative debate between *ṣāḥib al-ghinā'* (the man of singing) and *ṣāḥib al-Qur'ān* (the man of the Qur'ān). Although Ibn Qayyim does not mention it, the statements of the former are verbatim copies of the ones in the *Risālah* of Abū 'l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Hawzān al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072). For each statement Ibn Qayyim gives a very detailed rebuttal, quoting verses of the Qur'ān, selections from Ḥadīth, and logical arguments. When he takes the floor, so to speak, Ibn Qayyim makes sure that he will not leave even the slightest doubt in the mind of the reader about the point being debated. The debate turns lively as he introduces follow-up questions from both sides.

18. Al-Aḥadīth wa 'l-Āthār al-Marwiyyah fī Dhamm al-Ghinā' (Aḥādīth and Āthār Reported on the Censure of Ghinā') / Ibn Kathīr (Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'l-Fidā' Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar ibn Kathīr), d. 774/1372.

19. Risālah fī 'l-Samāʿ wa 'l-Raqṣ (Epistle on Samāʿ and Dancing) / Al-Manbijī, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ṣāliḥī, d. 785/1383.

Al-Manbijī has collected the answers of Ibn Taymiyyah to the question of samāʿ and Sufi dance. This book was published by Dar Ibn Ḥazm with the research of Muḥammad Ṣubḥī Ḥasan in 1413/1993. It begins by stating that Ibn Taymiyyah was asked whether listening to *qaṣā'id* sung with melodies to the accompaniment of musical instruments was prohibited or permissible. The answer first explains that the required listening is that to the Qur'ān. Allāh commanded it and condemned those who ignore it while the Messenger and the Companions used to get together to listen to it. This listening is a sign of faith. The listening to whistling and clapping, on the other hand, was the practice of the pagans. In the first three centuries no one from the religious people in the Ḥijāz, al-Shām, Yemen, Miṣr, Maghreb, Irāq, or Khurasān gathered for this. Thus great Sufi masters like Ibrāhīm ibn Ad-ham (d. 161/778), Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ (d. 187/803), Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815), Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 215/830), Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥawārī (d. 230/844), al-Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d. 253/867), and others like them never attended samāʿ. It emerged in the late 200s and when it did the Imāms censured it. Other Sufis who listened to it in the beginning, abandoned the practice later.

20. *Naṣīḥah fī Dhamm al-Malāhī* (Exhortation in Censure of Musical Instruments) / Ibn Jamāʿah (Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad), d. 790/1388.

21. *Bayān al-Ijmāʿ ʿalā Manʿ al-Ijtimāʿ fī Bidʿat al-Ghināʾ wa ʾl-Samāʿ* (Exposition of the Consensus Concerning the Prohibition of Gathering for the Innovation of Singing and Samāʿ) / Al-Biqāʿī (Burhān al-Dīn Abū ʾl-Ḥasan Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar), d. 885/1480.

22. *Al-Rahṣ wa ʾl-Waqṣ li-Mustaḥill al-Raqṣ* (Foot Wounding and Neck Breaking for Those Who Regard Dancing Lawful) / Al-Ḥalabī (Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī), d. 952/1545.

23. *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ ʿan Muḥarramāt al-Lahw wa ʾl-Samāʿ* (Prevention of the Riffraff from Forbidden Entertainments and Samāʿ) / Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (Shihāb al-Dīn Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar al-Makkī al-Haythamī), d. 974/1566.

Kaff al-Raʿāʿ was published from manuscripts in 1406/1986 by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Khāliq ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭāʾ. As Ibn Ḥajar explains in his introduction, he wrote the book at the urging of friends to respond to *Faraḥ al-Asmāʿ bi-Rakhṣ al-Samāʿ* by Abū ʾl-Mawāhib Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Tūnisī al-Shādhilī, known as Ibn Zaghdān (d. 881 AH). The book also contains answers to the arguments of Ibn Ḥazm and Ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī. The book consists of an introduction and two chapters. The first part deals with prohibited forms of ghināʾ while the second deals with other prohibited pastimes like backgammon, chess, and playing with pigeons.

He includes detailed discussion of duff, mizmār, kūbah, qaḍīb, shabbābah, yarāʿ, ṣanj, ṭunbūr, and ʿūd. He writes, "Awtār and maʿāzif like ṭunbūr, ʿūd, ṣanj, rabāb, jank, . . . are well-known instruments used by people given to vain distractions, impudence, and sin. All of these are prohibited without any disagreement."[2]

He also exposes Ibn Zaghdān's deceptive quoting of al-Māwardī, when the former said: "Al-Māwardī reported its permission from some Shāfiʿī scholars." Ibn Ḥajar notes that al-Māwardī had followed his statement by a rejection and negation, which Ibn Zaghdān omitted. "This is the limit of concealing and of making of false accusations," he deplores.

The book also addresses the question, when there is difference of opinions among scholars, can one follow any of them? Answer: It is not permissible to follow a legal opinion outside the four schools. This is because legal rulings contain many details and fine points which have been continuously reviewed and refined in the four schools, but not in others like the defunct Ẓāhirī school.

24. Risālah fī 'l-Samāʿ wa 'l-Ghinā' (Treatise Concerning Samāʿ and Ghinā') / Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī (Nūr al-Dīn Abū 'l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Sulṭān Muḥammad al-Qārī al-Harawī), d. 1014/1606.

In his *Risālah*, Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī states that samāʿ falls into three categories: First is ḥarām (prohibited). This is for most people especially the youth and the masses. Those in whom lusts are dominant, pursuit of pleasures has taken hold, the love of the world has taken control, their inner self and states have been muddied, and their objectives and intentions have been corrupted, in them samāʿ only excites what is predominant in their hearts from the despicable qualities. Then he quotes Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī (d. 205 AH):

> A good voice only excites what is in the heart. Especially in our times [i.e. the second and third century of Hijrah] with the muddying of our states, corruption of our deeds, and cheapness of our talk, we ask Allāh for protection in our destinies.[3]

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[2] Al-Haythamī, *Kaff al-Raʿāʿ*, القسم الثالث عشر: الأوتار والمعازف [Section 13: Awtār and Maʿāzif], 124.

[3] Mullā ʿAli al-Qārī, *al-Samāʿ*, 113.

The second category is *mubāḥ* (permitted). It is for the one whose only share in it is the pleasure of listening to a good voice, who seeks reduction of his grief on the absence or death of someone. In other words it is for the people in whom the good voice does not lead to any of the problems listed above.

The third category is *mandūb* (recommended). It is for the person who has been overwhelmed by the love of Allāh. Samāʿ excites only noble qualities, happy states, and elevated stations in him. As an illustration of who these people are, he mentions the incident of four persons who went to the beach one day. Just as food was served, someone started reciting a verse, "Food distracts you from the permanent abode. / Loving the pleasures of the body is not beneficial." One of them made a long cry and fell down, unconscious. Everyone started to cry. The host says that we cleared the tablecloth and they had not taken one bite.[4]

He concludes by categorically stating that the use of duff, shabbābah, dance, and clapping done by some Sufis in his time was a great evil and everyone was responsible for righting this wrong with his hands or tongue, to the extent of his ability.[5]

25. *Ḥurmat al-Samāʿ wa 'l-Ghinā'* (Prohibition of Samāʿand Ghinā') / ʿIṣmatullāh ibn Aʿẓam ibn ʿAbd Rabb al-Rasūl al-Sahāranpūrī, d. 1100/1688.

26. *Risālah fī Ḥukm al-Samāʿ wa fī Wujūb Kitābat al-Muṣḥaf bi 'l-Rasm al-ʿUthmānī* (Epistle on the Ruling on Samāʿ and on the Obligation of Writing the Qur'ānic text in the ʿUthmānī script) / ʿAlī al-Nūrī ibn Muḥammad, d. 1118/1706.

As Shaykh Nūrī explains, he wrote the *Risālah fī Ḥukm al-Samāʿ* at the request of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Salām ibn ʿUthmān (d. 1139 AH). In it he asserts: "Whatever I have written here is the truth. There is no doubt or suspicion about it." This should relieve any doubt that it is a nebulous or controversial subject. The words of this al-Azhar graduate and Sufi should be an eye opener to those who have come to associate both of these labels with blanket permissibility. He rejects the idea that one can gain closeness to Allāh by playing musical instruments.

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[4] Ibid., 116.

[5] Ibid., 122.

27. *Bawāriq al-Asmāʿ fī Ilḥād Man Yuḥill al-Samāʿ* (Lightning Flashes to Show the Deviation of the one who Declares Samāʿ Permissible) / Qāḍī Mīr ʿĀlam (published 1308/1890).

Bawāriq al-Asmāʿ was written in response to a booklet by one Mullā Fayḍ ʿĀlam of Hazārah (now in Pakistan) in which he had declared support for music and singing. The title is in response to the epistle by Aḥmad al-Ghazālī, because Mullā Fayḍ ʿĀlam had copied the argument of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. The book is in Farsi, with most quotes in Arabic and a couple in Urdu, all without translation. It was clearly meant for the educated classes of the time who could read all three languages.

It also reports that during the time of Khawājah Niẓām al-Dīn (d. 725/1325), a debate had taken place in Delhi on the issue of samāʿ. At that time, the ʿulamāʾ had also issued a fatwa in response to a question about the dervish ceremonies in which young and old, singers and dancers, and wine drinkers etc. took part. Question: Will anyone who declares such samāʿ as ḥalāl and a means of getting closer to Allāh and who condemns those who oppose these practices become an apostate? Answer: Yes, yes, yes. Signatures of eighteen ʿulamāʾ are included.[6] It also quotes from Mawlānā Quṭb al-Dīn that the Companions practiced *taṣawwuf* in its real sense (purifying one's heart) but they did not dance or gather for music and singing.[7]

DEFENSE OF SAMĀʿ

Below is a list of Sufi books presenting the case for permissibility of samāʿ.

1. *Al-Lumaʿ* / Abū Naṣr ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, d. 378/988.

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[6] ʿĀlam, *Bawāriq al-Ismāʿ*, 48.

[7] Ibid., 66.

Al-Lumaʿ is probably the earliest available Arabic text on Sufism. Its chapter on samāʿ discusses both its permissibility and the conditions for that permissibility. Many of the arguments used by Imām Ghazālī in his *Iḥyā'* appear to be taken from this book. While defending samāʿ, the author declares that listening to stringed instruments, wind instruments, maʿāzif, kūbah, and drums is included in the prohibited samāʿ.[8] He also declares samāʿ off-limits to anyone who has the love of this world in his heart.

2. *Tajwīz al-Samāʿ* (Permissibility of Samāʿ) / Abū Muḥammad ʿAṭiyyah ibn Saʿīd ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Andalusī, d. 407/1016.

3. *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ fī 'l-Radd ʿalā man Yuḥarrim al-Samāʿ bi 'l-Ijmāʿ* (Lightning Flashes to Refute the One who Declares Consensus on Prohibition of Samāʿ) / Abū 'l-Fatḥ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, d. 520/1126.

As the provocative title suggests, *Bawāriq al-Ilmāʿ* uses very strong words in defense of samāʿ. Even then it lends little support to the "Islāmic" concerts of today. We have discussed it in detail in chapter 8.

4. *ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif* (Secrets of Gnosis) / Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī, d. 632/1234.

This book is an introduction to Sufism and a guide for the Sufis. Of its sixty-three sections, four are devoted to samāʿ. He defends listening to the recital of poetry that reminds one of the Paradise and Hell and inspires one to the performance of virtue. However listening from non-maḥram women or beardless young boys is prohibited. Further, while there is some latitude for use of duff and shabbābah in the Shāfiʿī school, it is preferable to avoid them and stay away from controversies. One section is devoted to the censure of samāʿ because it had degenerated into a gateway for seduction (fitnah) and had lost its safeguards. In this section he uses the terms samāʿ and ghinā' interchangeably and shows that it is a sin according to most of the authorities. Verses of Sūrah Luqmān, al-Najm, and al-Isrā' (see chapter 5) are quoted in support of this position.

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[8] Al-Sarrāj, *Al-Lumaʿ*, 245.

5. *Al-Rukhṣah fī 'l-Ghinā' wa 'l-Ṭarab bi-Sharṭih* (Concession in Singing and Entertainment with Music with Conditions) / Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, d. 748/1347.

6. *Al-Imtā' bi-Aḥkām al-Samā'* / Ja'far ibn Taghlib al-Udfuwī, d. 749 AH.

7. *Faraḥ al-Asmā' bi-Rukhs al-Samā'* (Pleasure for the Ears with Concession for Samā')/ Muḥammad al-Shādhilī al-Tūnisī, d. 850/1446.

8. *Iḍāḥ al-Dalālāt fī Samā' al-Ālāt* (Clarification of Proofs on Listening to Instruments) / 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī, d. 1143/1730.

We have discussed it in detail in chapter 8.

9. *Tashnīf al-Asmā' bi-Ba'ḍi Asrār al-Samā'* (Pleasing the Ear with some Secrets of Samā')/ Abū Zayd 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muṣṭafā al-'Aydarūsī al-Yamanī al-Miṣrī, d. 1192 /1778.

10. *Ibṭāl Da'wā 'l-Ijmā' fī Taḥrīm al-Samā'* (Invalidation of the Claim of Consensus on the Prohibition of Samā') / Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Shawkānī, d. 1250/1834.

Despite the strong title, al-Shawkānī is not lending open-ended support to proponents of music. He declares it to be among the suspect things that a believer should stay away from. We quoted his conclusion in chapter 12.

These are not exhaustive lists. Many books can be added to both. However they are representative of what has been written on the subject during the past centuries. The first three books in the first list condemn malāhī, or the instruments of diversion. These books were written in the third and fourth centuries. It was in the fourth century that *al-Lumaʿ* appeared, making a case for Sufi samāʿ. Most of the books written in the fifth century and later deal with samāʿ. Quoting earlier Sufi masters in support, they argue that samāʿ was not required to begin with and prevalent samāʿ was not permissible because of its use of musical instruments and other wrongful practices. The books written in defense of samāʿ also agree with the general impermissibility of musical instruments but argue for the limited permissibility of the instrument-free samāʿ with many restrictions.

APPENDIX 3

Biographical Notes

ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī (d. 1141/1729)
Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulsī was born and raised in Damascus. He traveled to Baghdād, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, and the Hijaz, and then returned to Damascus where he died. His father, Ismaʿīl ʿAbd al-Ghanī, was a Ḥanafī jurist as was he. Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghanī was a Sufi master ordained in the Qādiriyyah and Naqshbandiyyah *ṭarīqahs* and a prolific and eloquent writer.

ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Lakhnawī (1264–1304 / 1848–1887)
Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥayy ibn Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Anṣārī al-Lakhnawī al-Hindī, Abū ʾl-Ḥasanāt was from Lucknow, India. An authority in Ḥadīth, fiqh, and biographies, he wrote books of enduring value in all of these disciplines despite the fact that he died at age 40.

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنهما (d. 67/687)
ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنهما, known as the Imām of *mufassirs*, was the son of the Prophet's uncle Sayyidunā ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه. He was only thirteen when the Prophet ﷺ passed away. Because of his great knowledge and deep understanding, he gained prominence despite his youth. The Prophet ﷺ, had prayed for him, "Oh Allāh, grant him understanding of religion and teach him interpretation (of

the Qur'ān)."[1] The Companions had given him such titles as *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* (the interpreter of the Qur'ān), *al-Ḥabr* (the great scholar), and *al-Baḥr* (the ocean of knowledge). Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضي الله عنه said, "I have never seen anyone who was quicker in understanding and who had more knowledge and greater wisdom than Ibn ʿAbbās. I have seen ʿUmar رضي الله عنه summon him to discuss difficult problems in the presence of veterans of Badr."

ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه (d. 32/652)

ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd ibn Ghāfil ibn Ḥabīb al-Hudhalī رضي الله عنه, the great master of fiqh, tafsīr, Qur'ānic recitation, and Ḥadīth, was the sixth person to embrace Islām. In his first encounter with him, the Prophet ﷺ recognized his special merit and invited him to stay with him. Thus he practically grew in the household of the Prophet ﷺ. He took part in both migrations (Abyssinia and Madīnah) and was present in Badr. When ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه sent him to Kūfa to teach the people there, he said to them, "I have given you preference over my self." The Companions attested that ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd رضي الله عنه was the most knowledgeable among them regarding the Book of Allāh.[2] He himself said,

> By Allāh, there is no chapter or verse in the Book of Allāh about which I do not know where and in what context it was revealed. And if I were to find someone more knowledgeable than I about the Book of Allāh, I would ride to him if a camel could reach him.[3]

ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak (118–181 / 736–797)

ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Marūzī, Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was a great scholar of Ḥadīth, fiqh, and history in addition to being a great Sufi, mujahid, historian, and trader from Khurāsān.

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[1] Ibn ʿAbbās in *Musnad Aḥmad*, مسند عبد الله بن عباس [Musnad of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās], 3:321, no. 3033.

[2] Abū 'l-Aḥwaṣ in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, كتاب فضائل الصحابة ، باب من فضائل عبد الله بن مسعود وأمه رضي الله عنهما [Book: Merits of the Companions, Chapter: Merits of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd and his mother رضي الله عنهما], no. 6484.

[3] ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, كتاب فضائل القرآن ، باب القراء من أصحاب النبي ﷺ [Book: Virtues of the Qur'ān, Chapter: Reciters among the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ], no. 5053.

He traveled a lot for ḥajj, jihād, and business. At the same time he is the first person to write a book on jihād. His book on *zuhd* also continues to be published today.

ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضي الله عنه (d. 8 AH)
ʿAbdullāh ibn Rawāḥah رضي الله عنه was the great poet from among the Companions who fought with his sword as well as with his tongue for the sake of Islām. He participated in Badr, Uḥud, Ḥudaybiyyah, al-Aḥzāb, and Mu'tah, where he was the third commander of the army of 3000 facing 200,000 Romans. He was martyred there. In battles he would use his poetry to inspire fellow soldiers.

Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Qurṭubī (578–656 / 1182–1258)
Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Ibrāhīm, Abū 'l-ʿAbbās al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, known as Ibn al-Muzayyin was a prominent Mālikī scholar from al-Andalus (Muslim Spain) who had mastered both Ḥadīth and fiqh. Among his students was the famous Imām Qurṭubī, or Imām Abū ʿAbdullāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Bakr al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH). He was born in Qurṭubah and died in Alexandria.

Abū 'l-Daḥdāḥ رضي الله عنه (d. 3/625)
Thābit ibn ʿAmr ibn Zayd ibn ʿAdī, Abū 'l-Daḥdāḥ رضي الله عنه was an Anṣārī Companion. He took part in the battle of Badr and was martyred in Uḥud. The incident of his giving away in charity his huge date garden is well-known.

Abū Ḥātim. *See* Ibn Ḥibbān.

Abū Hurayrah رضي الله عنه (d. 59/679)
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣakhr al-Dawsī memorized and narrated the most aḥādīth from among all the Companions. He was born an orphan eight years before the beginning of Revelation. He arrived in Madīnah eight years after *hijrah* when he accepted Islām. After that he stayed closely in the company of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, devoting his life to the learning, teaching and propagating of Ḥadīth. He narrated 5374 aḥādīth, to more than eight hundred Companions and Successors.

Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Baghawī (213–317 / 828–929)
ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn al-Marzubān, Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Baghawī was born in Baghdād, although his family was from Baghshūr in Afghānistān. He also died in Baghdād. He was the prominent Ḥadīth authority in Irāq in the 3rd/9th century. (He should not be confused with Abū Muhammad Husayn ibn Masʿūd ibn Muhammad al-Farrā' al-Baghawī [435-516/1043-1122], the famous author of *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*, and *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*).

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه **(10 BH–74 AH / 613–693)**
Saʿd ibn Mālik ibn Sinān al-Khudrī al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī was the famous Companion from Madīnah who spent much time in the company of the Prophet ﷺ. He narrated 1180 aḥādīth.

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996)
Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAṭiyyah al-Ḥārithī, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī was a Mālikī jurist and Sufi scholar. He was born in Makkah and later moved to Baṣra and then Baghdād. He spent much time in Sufi spiritual exercises. For a long time he did not eat regular food and subsisted on grasses and weeds. His book on Sufism, *Qūt al-Qulūb* (Nourishment for the Hearts), is an important Sufi manual that makes it clear that the place for Sufism is within the Sharīʿah and not outside it.

Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī رضي الله عنه **(5 BH–86 AH)**
Ṣadī ibn ʿAjlān Abū Umāmah al-Bāhilī was the chief of the Bāhilī tribe. When he accepted Islām, so did his entire tribe. He participated in Ḥudaybiyyah. Later he moved to Ḥimṣ (al-Shām) and was the last living Companion in al-Shām. He has reported many ahādīth from the Prophet ﷺ as well as from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and Muāʿdh ibn Jabal and others, which can be found in Bukhārī and other collections.

Abū ʿUmar. ***See*** Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr.

Al-Adhraʿī (708-783/1308-1381)
Aḥmad ibn Ḥamdān ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Shihāb al-Dīn al-Adhraʿī was a Shāfiʿī jurist. He was born in Adhraʿāt (now called Dar'a) in southern al-Shām and studied fiqh

in Egypt. He served as a qāḍī in Ḥalab (Aleppo) in northern al-Shām. He left many treatises in fiqh.

Al-Ājurrī (d. 360/970)
Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbdullāh, Abū Bakr al-Ājurrī was from Ājur, a village near Baghdād. A prolific author, he was a Ḥadīth scholar as well as a prominent Shāfiʿī jurist. He taught in Baghdād until the year 330 AH, after which he moved to Makkah, where he spent the remaining thirty years of his life.

ʿAlī al-Nūrī (d. 1118/1706)
ʿAlī ibn Sālim ibn Muḥammad ibn Sālim ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Nūrī was raised in Tunis and completed his education at al-Azhar University. His teacher there, Shaykh Ibn Nāṣir al-Darʿī (see his biography below), was a Sufi master as well. Shaykh Nūrī was authorized in the Shādhilī *ṭarīqah*.

ʿAlī al-Ṭantāwī (1325–1419 / 1908–1999)
Judge, freedom fighter, author, teacher and orator, Shaykh ʿAlī al-Ṭantāwī was born in Damascus and died in Jeddah where he was residing since 1963. Shaykh al-Ṭantāwī was involved in the struggle for independence of Syria, Irāq, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Palestine. He was awarded the King Faisal International Prize in 1990 for service to the cause of Islām. Shaykh al-Ṭantāwī authored many books on a wide variety of subjects, including an eight-volume memoir.

Al-Ālūsī (1217–1270 / 1802–1854)
Maḥmūd ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Ālūsī, Shihāb al-Dīn, Abū 'l-Thanā' the Ḥanafī mufti of Baghdād, was one of the most prominent scholars of Irāq in the 13th/19th century. His monumental thirty-part tafsīr of the Qur'ān, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, was written in fifteen years and his deep knowledge of Arabic grammar, morphology, Ḥadīth, fiqh, literature, history, and myriad other subjects shines through this work. According to the late ʿAllāmah Yūsuf Binnōrī *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī* occupies the same place among Qur'ānic commentaries as *Fatḥ al-Bārī* does among commentaries on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

Al-Aṣamm (247–346 / 861–957)
Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb ibn Yūsuf, Abū ʾl ʿAbbās al-Aṣamm was an important Ḥadīth scholar from Nīsābūr in the 4th/10th century. He taught Ḥadīth for seventy-six years, covering an unprecedented three generations—fathers, sons, and grandsons. To acquire Ḥadīth knowledge he traveled extensively and heard Ḥadīth from scholars in Makkah, Egypt, Damascus, Mosul, Kūfa, and Baghdād.

Ayatollah Rūḥullāh Mūsawī Khomeinī (1319–1409 /1902–1989)
Ayatollāh Rūḥullāh Mūsawī Khomeinī was the Shīʿah scholar and the Supreme Leader of Irān after the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that he led. He remained its Supreme Leader until his death.

Al-Barā' ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه (d. 20/641)
Al-Barā' ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه was brother of famous Companion Anas ibn Mālik رضي الله عنه. He was known for his exceptional bravery.

Al-Buraʿī (d. 803/1400)
ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Buraʿī al-Yamānī was a muftī and a teacher as well as a Sufi poet. His anthology of poetry consists mostly of praise of the Prophet ﷺ. He hailed from Buraʿ, a mountain in the Tihāmah region of Yemen.

Al-Būṣīrī (608–696 / 1212–1296)
Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥammād ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Ṣunhājī al-Būṣīrī al-Miṣrī, Sharaf al-Dīn, Abu ʿAbdullāh was a well-known poet of the 7th/13th century. Originally from Morocco, he was born in Bahshīm and passed away in Alexandria. His mother was from Būṣīr in Egypt and that is why he is refered to as Būṣīrī. He has a *dīwān* of poetry and his most famous poems are *al-Burdah* and *al-Hamziyyah*. Many people wrote commentaries on, as well as qaṣīdahs in the meter of, his *Burdah*. He also wrote a qaṣīdah in the meter of the famous *Qaṣīdah Burdah* of the Companion Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr رضي الله عنه. It begins "Until when shall you remain occupied with pleasures?"

Al-Ḍaḥḥāk (d. 105/723)
Al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Muzāḥim al-Balkhī al-Khurāsānī, Abū 'l-Qāsim is the famous *mufassir* from Khurāsān. Many Companions were alive when he was born, but it is doubtful that he met any of them. Rather he obtained his knowledge from Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, through whom he received the commentaries of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, Ibn ʿUmar, Anas ibn Mālik, and other luminous Companions رضي الله عنهم. It is a measure of his interest in teaching children that more than 3000 children were in his school.

Al-Dāraquṭnī (306–385 / 919–995)
ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn Mahdī, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Dāraquṭnī al-Shāfiʿī was a leading Shāfiʿī jurist and Ḥadīth scholar in the 4th/10th century. He was born in Dār al-Quṭun, a neighborhood in Baghdād. He wrote many books relating to Ḥadīth and Ḥadīth sciences, including a Sunan.

Al-Dawlaʿī (514–598 / 1120–1201)
ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Zayd ibn Yāsīn al-Thaʿlabī al-Dawlaʿī, Abū 'l-Qāsim, Ḍiyā' al-Dīn was a Shāfiʿī jurist from Mosul. He later moved to Damascus where he taught and gave public lectures. He authored many books.

Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī (201–270 / 816–884)
Dāwūd ibn ʿAlī ibn Khalaf al-Aṣbahānī, Abū Sulayman al-Ẓāhirī was the founder of the now defunct Ẓāhirī (literalist) school of Islamic law. He was born in Kūfa and lived in Baghdād.

Al-Dhahabī (673–748 / 1274–1348)
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUthmān ibn Qāymāz al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn, Abū ʿAbdullāh Al-Dhahabī was Ḥafiz of Ḥadīth, historian, scholar, and researcher. His family was originally from Turkmenistan but he was born in Damascus and died there. Imām al-Dhahabī was a prolific writer and wrote nearly a hundred books on various subjects. He is especially renowned for his biographical works.

Dhū 'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 245/859)
Thawbān ibn Ibrāhīm Dhū 'l-Nūn Abū 'l-Fayyāḍ or Abū 'l-Fayḍ is the famous Sufi master from Egypt known for his eloquence, wisdom, and poetry. A famous story tells a lot about his concern and compassion for the wayward. One day he and his disciples came across a boatload of people on the river Nile, who were busy in enjoying music and other sins. Disgusted with their unseemly behaviour, his companions asked him to curse them. Dhu ‘l-Nun raised his hands and cried: “O Lord, as You have given these people joy in this world, make them so they get joy in the next world!” The sincerity of his duʿā touched the hearts of the merry-makers who broke out in tears and broke their lutes.

Al-Fārābī (260–339 / 874–950)
Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān ibn Ūzlugh, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, known as the Second Teacher (Aristotle is known as the First Teacher), introduced Greek philosophy to the Muslim world. Originally from Turkey, he was born in Fārāb and grew up in Baghdād. Later he moved to Egypt and then to Damascus where he died. He wrote books on philosophy and music.

Al-Fāzāzī (d. 627/1230)
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Yakhlaftan ibn Aḥmad, Abū Zayd al-Fāzāzī al-Qurṭubī was born in Qurṭubah and died in Marrakesh. In addition to being a poet, he also had interest in ʿilm al-kalām and fiqh. His eulogy of the Prophet ﷺ is titled *al-ʿAsharāt*.

Al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (321–405 / 933–1014)
Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥamdawayh, Al-Ṭahmanī al-Naysābūrī, known as al-Ḥākim is well-known for his *Mustadrak* on the Ṣaḥīḥayn. It consists of aḥādīth that in his view meet the criteria of Imāms Bukhārī and Muslim for authenticity but are not included in their collections. He also wrote books on history, Ḥadīth methodology, and biography.

Al-Harawī (396–481 / 1006–1089)
ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Anṣārī al-Harawī, Abū Ismāʿīl was a prominent Ḥanbalī scholar of the 5th/11th century. He was

from the progeny of the famous Companion Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī. He was a master in lexicography, history, biographies, and Ḥadīth. He also wrote a biography of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (21–110 / 642–728)
Abū Sa'īd al-Ḥasan ibn Yasār al-Baṣrī was a famous Successor gifted with the rare combination of vast knowledge and moving speech. He was also known for his intense devotion and piety. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was born in Madīnah and grew up in the home of Umm Salamah, one of the wives of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Later he moved to Baṣra. Imām Ghazālī said that he was closest to the Prophets in speech and to the Companions in character.

Ḥassān ibn Thābit (d. 54/674) رضي الله عنه
Ḥassān ibn Thābit ibn al-Mundhir al-Khazrajī al-Ansārī accepted Islam at the age of sixty and became the Poet of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. Even before Islām he was an accomplished poet of the Ansār whose fame had reached the Ghassānid kings. He used to recite his poetry in the Masjid of the Prophet ﷺ. He lived for another sixty years after accepting Islām.

Al-Ḥaṭṭāb (902–954 / 1497–1547)
Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ru'aynī, known as al-Ḥaṭṭāb was a Sufi and a Mālikī jurist of the 10th/16th century. He was born in Makkah and died in Tripoli. His six volume *Mawāhib al-Jalīl* is an important source book for Mālikī fiqh. He also wrote a monograph on calculation of ṣalāh times by astronomical observations without the use of any instruments.

Al-Hujwīrī (d. 465/1077)
Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al-Jullabi al-Hujwīrī al-Ghaznawī also known as Data Ganj Bakhsh or Data Sāhib, was a Persian Sufi and scholar during the 5th/11th century. He was born in Ghaznah (in present day Afghanistan) and died in Lahore (in present day Pakistan). His most famous work is *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (Unveiling the Veiled), the classic text on Sufism written in Persian. It contains advice for the seekers as well as biographies of Sufi masters.

Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (368–463 / 978–1071)
Yūsuf ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Barr al-Namarī al-Qurṭubī al-Mālikī, Abū ʿUmar was a Mālikī scholar from Qurṭubah. He excelled in Ḥadīth sciences and was known as Ḥāfiẓ al-Maghrib. He was a historian, researcher, and a prolific writer. Among his famous works are *al-Istīʿāb* (a collection of biographies of the Companions) and *Jāmiʿ Bayān al-ʿIlm* (a collection of Ḥadīth).

Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā (208–281 / 823–894)
ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUbayd ibn Sufyān, Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā al-Qurashī al-Umawī, Abū Bakr was a freed slave of Banū Umayyah. Referred to as a *ḥāfiẓ* of Ḥadīth, he was also a powerful speaker who could make people laugh or cry through his speech. He was born in Baghdād and died there. He was a teacher of ʿAbbāsī Khalīfah al-Muʿtaḍid and his son Muktafī. The later was known as a just and wise ruler who brought many reforms to the ʿAbbāsī government during his five-year rule. Al-Dhahabī has listed 164 publications from Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā, about two dozen of which have been found and published.[4]

Ibn ʿAsākir (499–571 / 1105–1175)
Abū ʾl-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibatullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh, Ibn ʿAsākir was the great Ḥadīth master and historian from al-Shām. He authored about a hundred books. His most famous book is the eighty-volume *Tārīkh Dimashq,* also known as *Tārīkh Ibn ʿAsākir* . He used to teach at the Umawī Mosque in Damascus. Among his famous students was Sulṭān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyubī.

Ibn Baṭṭah (304–387 / 917–997)
ʿUbaydullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥamdān, Abū ʿAbdullāh, known as Ibn Baṭṭah, was a prominent Hanbalī jurist and Ḥadīth scholar. He authored more than a hundred books.

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[4] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalāʾ*, الطبقة الخامسة عشرة : ابن أبي الدنيا [Section: The Fifteenth Generation, Biography: Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā], 13:401–404.

Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (773–852 / 1372–1449)
Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Kanānī al-ʿAsqalānī, Abū ʾl-Faḍl, Shihāb al-Dīn, Ibn Ḥajar is the renowned Ḥadīth scholar and historian, whose commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī is an indispensable work for anyone who wants to study the latter. The fame of this book had reached many parts of the Muslim world even before its completion. He was born in Egypt and died there. His original interest was in literature and poetry, but then he turned to Ḥadīth studies and traveled to Yemen, the Arabian Peninsula, and other places for this purpose. His famous works include: *Lisān al-Mīzān*, *Nukhbat al-Fikr fī Muṣṭalaḥ Ahl al-Athar*, and *Fatḥ al-Bārī fī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.

Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī (909–974 / 1504–1567)
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī al-Saʿdī al-Anṣārī, Shihāb al-Dīn, Abū ʾl-ʿAbbās al-Makkī was a Shāfiʿī scholar who was born in Egypt and lived most of his life until his death in Makkah. He also studied at al-Azhar. He was granted permission to teach and give fatwa when he was barely twenty years old. Among his works is a book enumerating the merits of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

Ibn Ḥazm (384–456 / 994–1064)
ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn Saʿīd ibn Ḥazm al-Ẓāhirī, Abū Muḥammad was the great mujtahid from al-Andalus. His father was a minister in the government as was he, but later he abandoned government positions in favor of scholarly pursuits. He did much to revive the Ẓāhirī school, but despite his efforts the school ultimately died because of the built-in problems with its doctrines. Ibn Ḥazm left about 400 books on a variety of subjects including jurisprudence, principles of jurisprudence, biography, history, logic, theology, comparative religions, poetry, and literature. He made many enemies because of his sharp tongue. It was said that his tongue and the sword of Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf were siblings.

Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965)
Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥibbān ibn Muʿādh ibn Maʿbad al-Tamīmī, Abū Ḥātim al-Bustī was a storehouse of

knowledge in fiqh, language, Ḥadīth, medicine, geography, history, and other fields. He was born in Bust (in Sijistān) and traveled to Khurāsān, al-Shām, Egypt, Irāq, and Jazīrah. He also served as the Qāḍī in Samarqand for a long time. Most well-known for his *Ṣaḥīḥ,* he wrote extensively on subjects relating to Ḥadīth sciences. Many of his books are ten to thirty-volume works. He also compiled a collection of all the aḥādīth in the *Ṣiḥāh Sittah* after removing their chains of transmission.

Ibn Hishām (d. 213/828)

ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Hishām ibn Ayyūb al-Ḥimyarī al-Maʿāfirī, Abū Muḥammad, Jamāl al-Dīn was a scholar of genealogy, language, and Arabic history. He was born and raised in Baṣra and passed away in Egypt. He is most famous for his biography of the Prophet ﷺ.

Ibn Jamāʿah (725–790 / 1325–1388)

Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad, Abū Isḥāq, Burhān al-Dīn, al-Maqdisī al-Shāfiʿī Ibn Jamāʿah was a scholar of extraordinary qualities. He has been referred to as the scholar's scholar and orator's orator. He was born in Egypt, grew up in Damascus, and moved to Jerusalem. He was appointed as a qāḍī in Egypt. After sometime he resigned and moved to Jerusalem. The Sulṭān persuaded him to come back to Egypt, which he did for a while and then again went back to Jerusalem. He also served as a qāḍī in al-Shām. It was for him that the marble pulpit was built at the Dome of the Rock from where he used to give the khuṭbah for Eid. Previously there was a wooden pulpit. He also wrote a ten-volume tafsīr of the Qur'ān.

Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224–310 / 839–923)

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd al-Ṭabarī, Abū Jaʿfar was the eminent historian, jurist, and commentator of the Qur'ān. He was born in Tabristān and moved to Baghdād where he lived until the end of his life. He is most famous for his eleven-volume *Tarīkh al-Tabarī* and thirty-volume tafsīr of the Qur'ān. It is said that he wrote forty pages a day, every day, for forty years.

Ibn al-Jawzī (508–597 / 1114–1201)

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Jawzī al-Qurashī al-Baghdādī was a major Ḥanbalī scholar of his time and a descendant of the first Khalīfah, Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. He was born and lived his entire life in Baghdād. A prolific writer, he has approximately 250 written works attributed to him. Topics include tafsīr, Ḥadīth, history, biographies, Qur'ānic sciences, theology, admonition, and fiqh. He was also a powerful speaker whose lectures attracted hundreds of thousands of people. He said, "I scribed with my hand one thousand volumes. One hundred thousand people repented at my hand and twenty thousand accepted Islām."

Ibn al-Jayyāb (673–749 / 1274–1349)

ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Sulaymān, Abū 'l-Ḥasan ibn al-Jayyāb was a poet from Gharnāṭah (Granada) in al-Andalus, and the teacher of Lisān al-Dīn ibn al-Khaṭīb. He has an anthology of poetry.

Ibn Jurayj (80–150 / 699–767)

ʿAbd al-Malik ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Jurayj, Abū 'l-Walīd and Abū Khālid was born in Makkah and lived all his life there, although he was of Roman descent. He is among the first people to produce books in Ḥadīth. A small work by him entitled *Juz' Ibn Jurayj* was published in Riyadh in 1412. It contains seventy-three narrations with full *isnād*.

Ibn Khaldūn (732–808 / 1332–1406)

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad, Ibn Khaldūn Abū Zayd, the famous fourteenth century Arab historian, is considered as the father of many modern day sciences including historiography, sociology, and economics. He was born in Tunisia in a family of scholars and statesmen who came from al-Andalus. He traveled widely and also served as a Mālikī qadī in Cairo where he later died. His *Muqaddimah* laid down the foundations of several fields of knowledge. Arnold Toynbee wrote, "He has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place."

Ibn al-Munādī (256–336 / 870–947)
Aḥmad ibn Ja'far ibn Muḥammad, Abū 'l-Ḥusayn ibn al-Munādī was a Ḥanbalī scholar of tafsīr and Ḥadīth from Baghdād. He wrote more than a hundred books.

Ibn Nāṣir al-Dar'ī (1011–1085 / 1603–1674)
Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, Ibn Nāṣir, Abū 'Abdullāh al-Dar'ī was a Mālikī scholar from Morroco and a teacher of Shaykh al-Nurī (see his biography in this chapter). He had a monastery and a huge following. An avid reader, he started collecting books from a young age despite such poverty that he could not afford a bed and used to sleep on the bare floor. He wrote many books on fiqh, astronomy, medicine, lexicography, and Ḥadīth. He devoted one book to the biographies of his teachers. He also wrote *Manẓūmah fī Fiqh al-Mālik*, presenting the Mālikī jurisprudence in verse.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (691–751 / 1292–1350)
Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr ibn Ayyūb ibn Sa'd al-Dimashqī, Abū 'Abdullāh, Shams al-Dīn was one of the great Islāmic scholars of all times. He was from Damascus. A devoted disciple of Ibn Taymiyyah, he was imprisoned with him and was released only after the latter's death. He was an eloquent and prolific writer and produced books of enduring values on jurisprudence, tafsīr, Sufism, Ḥadīth, music, and many others. He was the principle source for spreading the works of his teacher.

Ibn Qudāmah, Muwaffaq al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (541–620 / 1146–1223)
'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, later al-Dimashqī, al-Ḥanbalī, Abū Muḥammad, Muwaffaq al-Dīn was a major Ḥanbalī jurist from al-Shām. He was born in a village near Nābulus (Palestine) and educated in Damascus, where he spent most of his life. His *al-Mughnī* is a standard reference text for Ḥanbalī fiqh. His other works include books on principles of jurisprudence, theology, and merits of the Companions.

Ibn Qudāmah, Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (597–682 / 1200–1283)
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī, Abū ʾl-Faraj, Shams al-Dīn was a leading Ḥanbalī jurist and the first Ḥanbalī qadī in Damascus. He served there for twelve years.

Ibn Saʿd (168–230 / 784–845)
Muḥammad ibn Saʿd ibn Manīʿ, Abū ʿAbdullāh was born in Basra and travelled to Kūfa, Baghdād, Makkah, and Madīnah for education. His teachers included Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah, Wakī ibn al-Jarrāḥ, and Hushaym ibn Bashīr. Finally he settled in Baghdād serving his teacher Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Wāqidī. He was known as the scribe for Wāqidī. Among his prominent students were Ibn Abī ʾl-Dunyā, Abū ʾl-Qāsim al-Baghawī, and the historian and genealogist al-Balādhurī. His book of biographies *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* also known as *al-Ṭabaqāt ibn Saʿd* has given him a lasting place among scholars and authors.

Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (46–96 / 666–815)
Ibrāhīm ibn Yazīd ibn Qays ibn al-Aswad, Abū ʿImrān al-Nakhaʿī was a great jurist and Ḥadīth master from the generation of Successors. He was the main student of ʿAlqamah and the main teacher of Ḥammād who was in turn the main teacher of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah.

Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd (109–184 / 727–800)
Ibrāhīm ibn Saʿd ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf, Abū Isḥāq al-Zuhrī was from Madīnah and had moved to Baghdād. According to many reports he considered ʿūd-playing permissible. However he has not left any books that would explain his position and his arguments. His stand was rejected by a consensus of jurists.

ʿIkrimah Abū ʿAbdullāh (25–105 / 645–723)
ʿIkrimah ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Barbarī, Abū ʿAbdullāh was a freed slave of Ibn ʿAbbās. ʿAllāmah, *ḥafiẓ*, and *mufassir*, he was one of the most knowledgeable Successors in tafsīr. He narrated from

many prominent Companions including Ibn ʿAbbās, Ibn ʿUmar, ʿĀ'ishah, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Abū Hurayrah ﵃ and others. Shaʿbī is reported to have said, "There is no one left alive with more knowledge of the book of Allāh than ʿIkrimah." Qatādah said, "The most knowledgeable in matters of ḥalāl and ḥarām is Ḥasan (Ḥasan al-Baṣrī), the most knowledgeable in rites of pilgrimage is ʿAṭā' (ʿAṭā' ibn Rabāḥ) and the most knowledgeable in tafsīr is ʿIkrimah." [5]

Al-ʿImādī (978–1051 / 1570–1641)
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿImād al-Dīn al-Effendī was from Damascus where he also served as a mufti. He was also a poet. He wrote books on fiqh, biography, and tafsīr.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (80–150 / 699–767)
Al-Nuʿmān ibn Thābit al-Kūfī, Abū Ḥanīfah is known as "The Greatest Imām" *(al-Imām al-Aʿẓam).* He is well known for his immense knowledge, sharp intelligence and wit, extraordinary wisdom, and exemplary piety and nobleness of character. The Ḥanafī school that he founded has the largest number of followers of any school in Islāmic Law. Of the four *mujtahid* imams, he is the only one from the Successors *(tābiʿīn)*. He organized the study of fiqh using a systematic approach, investigating and developing rulings for not only the problems that somebody had inquired about but also for other situations that could be conceived. The order for the presentation of fiqh subjects that he established, beginning with purity *(ṭahārah)* followed by prayer (ṣalāh*)*, etc. was retained by all subsequent jurists. Imām Shāfiʿī said: "People are all dependents of Abū Ḥanīfah in fiqh."

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (164–241 / 780–855)
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal, Abū ʿAbdullāh was one of the four mujtahid Imāms of fiqh. He was born in Baghdad and traveled widely to seek knowledge, going to Kūfa, Baṣra, Makkah, Madīnah, Yemen, al-Shām, Khurasan, al-Maghrib, and al-Jazā'ir. He went through a great trial for a long period at the hands of four

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[5] Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām al-Nubalā'*, عكرمة مولى ابن عباس [ʿIkrimah Mawlā Ibn ʿAbbās], 5:17.

ʿAbbāsī rulers for his refusal to accept their doctrine regarding the Qur'ān being a creation instead of the Word of Allāh. Ultimately it was through his perseverance and steadfastness that the deviant doctrine was defeated and rescinded. His *Musnad* contains 40,000 entries. He also wrote books on tafsīr, fiqh, history, and merits of the Companions.

Imām Mālik (93–179 / 712–795)
Mālik ibn Anas ibn Mālik, Abū ʿAbdullāh was the second of the four mujtahid Imāms. Known as the Imām of the Abode of Emigration, he was born in Madīnah and spent his life there. His most famous book is *al-Muwaṭṭa'* ("The Approved"), a collection of sound aḥādīth reported by the people of the Ḥijāz together with the sayings of the Companions, the Successors, and the generation after them. The Mālikī school had followers in North Africa, al-Andalus, Egypt, and some areas of al-Shām, Yemen, Sudān, Irāq, and Khurāsān.

Imām Shāfiʿī (150–204 / 767–820)
Muḥammad ibn Idrīs ibn al-ʿAbbās ibn ʿUthmān ibn Shāfiʿ al-Hāshimī al-Qurashī al-Muṭṭalibī, Abū ʿAbdullāh was the third of the four mujtahid Imāms. He was born in Gaza (Palestine) and at the age of two moved to Makkah, where he grew up. He spent the last five years of his life in Egypt and is buried in Cairo. He shared the Prophet's lineage, ʿAbd al-Manāf being their common ancestor. Among his most prominent teachers were Imām Mālik ibn Anas and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, the student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Among his most important books is the seven-volume *al-Umm*, his book on fiqh.

Ismāʿīl ibn Nujayd (d. 366/977)
Ismāʿīl ibn Nujayd ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Salamī al-Naysābūrī al-Ṣūfī, Abū ʿAmr was a Sufi master and Ḥadīth scholar from Nishapur. He died in Makkah.

Junayd al-Baghdādī (220–298 / 835–910)
Al-Junayd ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, Abū 'l-Qāsim was a very eloquent Sufi master and scholar who was also very

well-versed in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. He spent his entire life in Baghdād. Al-Khuldī says, "We never saw any of our scholars who had in them both *ḥāl* (station of gnosis) and knowledge apart from Junayd." Known for his eloquence and scholarship, his gatherings used to gather people of varying backgrounds including *bulaghā'* (those interested in rhetoric), philosophers, and *mutakallimūn*.

Kaʿb ibn Mālik (d. 50/670) ؓ

Kaʿb ibn Mālik al-Ansārī al-Khazrajī was a Companion and a great poet of Islam. He had become famous as a poet even during the period of Jāhiliyyah and later devoted his poetic talent to the service of Islam.

Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr (d. 26/645)

Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr came from a family of poets from Najd. He, too, was one of the highest ranking poets of the Jāhiliyyah society. When Islām came, he used his poetry against the Muslims, especially in insulting Muslim women. So much so, that after the conquest of Makkah, when nearly all of the former enemies of Islām were pardoned, Kaʿb ibn Zuhayr was included in the few who were not. He then had a change of heart. He repented and came to the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ. There he recited a poem seeking forgiveness and praising the Messenger ﷺ. He was not only forgiven, the Messenger ﷺ gave him his cloak as a gift. That Poem of the Cloak (*Qaṣīdah Burdah*) has inspired innumerable eulogies for the Prophet ﷺ.

Al-Kindī (c. 185–260/801–873)

Yaʿqūb ibn Isḥāq al-Kindī, Abū Yūsuf is known as the "Philosopher of the Arabs." He came from the Arab tribe of Kindah and spent his early life in Kūfa, where his father was the governor. After going to Baghdād he became interested in philosophy. He wrote about 270 treatises in logic, philosophy, physics, mathematics, music, medicine, and natural history. Most of his works are lost.

Labīd ibn Rabīʿah (d. 41/661)

Labīd ibn Rabīʿah ibn Mālik was another of the giants of Arabic poetry in the Jāhiliyyah days. He was known as a generous and noble man and was one of the poets of the famous *al-Sabʿ al-Muʿallaqāt* (the seven poems hung on the walls of the Kaʿbah in the time of the Jāhiliyyah). When he accepted Islām, however, he stopped writing poetry altogether, losing all interest in it in the face of the Qur'ān.

Mak-ḥūl al-Shāmī (d. 112/730)

Mak-ḥūl ibn Abū Muslim ibn Shādhil, Abū ʿAbdullāh al-Shāmī was the preeminent jurist of al-Shām. He was of Persian origin and was born in Kabul. He traveled to many places for study of Ḥadīth and then settled in al-Shām.

Al-Manbijī (d. 785/1383)

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Ṣāliḥī, Shams al-Dīn al-Manbijī was a prominent Ḥanbalī jurist and Sufi from Damascus. He also wrote a book to explain the rulings regarding plague and offer consolation to the sufferers during the plague of 764 AH.

Al-Masʿūdī (d. 346/957)

ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Masʿūdī was the great historian and geographer from the descendants of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd ﵁. Born in Baghdād, he traveled to Persia, India, Indus Valley, Somalia, Arabia, al-Shām, Egypt, East Africa, Spain, Russia, and China. He abridged his thirty volume world history into *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʿādin al-Jawhar* (Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems) which has been popular ever since.

Al-Māwardī (364–450 / 974–1058)

ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb, Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī was from the eminent Shāfiʿī jurists of his time. He was born in Baṣra and educated there and in Baghdād, where he died. He was influenced by the Muʿtazilah philosophy. He served as a judge in numerous cities. He was later appointed as the Chief Judge "Aqḍā 'l-Quḍāt" during the era of ʿAbbāsī Khalīfah Al-Qā'im bi-Amrillāh. He wrote much about government law including the monumental *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah wal-Wilāyat al-Dīniyyah* (The Ordinances of Government). He also wrote on fiqh and tafsīr.

Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī (1292–1352 / 1875–1933)
Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī was born in Kashmir and educated at Deoband. He has a distinguished list of scholars both as his teachers and students. His teachers included Mawlānā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan and Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. His students included Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ, the Mufti of Pakistan. Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī, who was not his student, nevertheless offered him the same respect as a teacher because of the immense benefit he derived from Mawlānā Kashmīrī. He was ordained in Chishtiyyah and Suhrawardiyyah Sufi orders. Among his books is the Arabic commentary on Bukhāri titled *Fayḍ al-Bārī.*

Muḍar ibn Nizār
Muḍar ibn Nizār ibn Maʿd ibn ʿAdnān was the ancestor of the Quraysh.

Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ (1314–1396 /1897–1976)
Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ, commonly known as the Grand Mufti of Pakistan, was born in Deoband where his father was a teacher. After graduating from the Deoband school, Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ served there as a teacher and as chief mufti. In 1948 he moved to Pakistan and started a Darul Ulūm there, which became the leading Darul Ulūm in Pakistan. He was ordained in the four Sufi orders by his mentor Mawlānā Ashraf ʿAli Thānawī. He also took active part in the Pakistan independence movement. He produced hundreds of publications in Urdu and Arabic, the most famous of which is his eight-volume commentary on the Qur'ān known as *Maʿārif al-Qur'ān.*

Mufti Muḥammad Taqi Usmani (b. 1362/1943)
Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani is one of the leading Islamic scholars living today. He is an expert in the fields of exegesis, jurisprudence, economics, Ḥadīth and tasawwuf. Born in Deoband, he graduated from Darul Ulūm, Karachi, Pakistan. He specialized in Islamic Jurisprudence under the guidance of his eminent father, Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ. Since then, he has been teaching Ḥadīth and fiqh at the Darul Ulūm, Karachi. He also holds a degree in law and was a judge at the Sharīʿah Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court

of Pakistan. He is a consultant to several international Islamic financial institutions and has played a key part in the move toward interest-free banking and the establishment of Islamic financial institutions. Muftī Taqi Usmani has written more than sixty books in Arabic, Urdu, and English, including an English translation of the Qur'ān with brief notes.

Al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857)

Al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī, Abū ʿAbdullāh was a leading Sufi master and Shāfiʿī jurist. He was born and raised in Baṣra and died in Baghdād. He authored many treatises on ascetism as well as on theology, where he was among the first to refute the Muʿtazilah ideology. He studied fiqh with Imām Shāfiʿī and taught Sufism to Junayd al-Baghdādī.

Mujāhid ibn Jabr Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Makkī (d. 103 AH)

Mujāhid ibn Jabr Abū 'l-Ḥajjāj al-Makkī (d. 103 AH) was an eminent exegete and disciple of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنهما. He also narrated on the authority of Abū Hurayrah, ʿĀ'ishah, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Ibn ʿUmar, and others رضي الله عنهم. Sufyān al-Thawrī said, "Learn tafsīr from four people: Mujāhid, Saʿīd ibn Jubayr, ʿIkrimah, and Ḍaḥḥāk."

Mullā ʿAlī al-Qārī (d. 1014/1606)

ʿAlī ibn Sulṭān Muḥammad, Nūr al-Dīn al-Mullā al-Harawī, Abū 'l-Ḥasan was one of the great Ḥanafī masters in the 10th/16th century. Born in Herat, he spent most of his life in Makkah, where he is buried. He wrote extensively on tafsīr, Ḥadīth, fiqh, taṣawwuf, and Arabic grammar and literature. He is well known for his commentary on *Mishkāt al-Masābīḥ*, entitled *Mirqāt al-Mafātīḥ*, as well as a collection of Prophetic invocations called *al-Ḥizb al-Aʿẓam*.

Al-Munāwī (952–1031 / 1545–1622)

Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Ra'ūf ibn Tāj al-ʿĀrifīn ibn ʿAlī ibn Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Ḥaddādī, then *al-Munāwī al-Qāhirī, Zayn al-Dīn* was a leading scholar from Cairo. He produced about eighty treatises on Ḥadīth, Sīrah, fiqh, history, biographies, Arabic grammar, and medicine.

Al-Mundhirī (581–656 / 1185–1258)
ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm ibn ʿAbd al-Qawī ibn ʿAbdullāh, Abū Muḥammad, Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī was a leading Ḥadīth scholar from Egypt. His most famous book is *Al-Targhīb wa 'l-Tarhīb.*

Al-Nābighah al-Jaʿdī (d. ~ 50/670)
Qays ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Jaʿdī al-ʿĀmirī was a Companion and a great poet. He was famous for his poetry even in the Jāhiliyyah days. He was one of those people who kept away from idol worship and stood against alcohol consumption even before the advent of Islām. Later he moved to Kūfa and then to Iṣfahān where he died at more than hundred years of age.

Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith (d. 2 AH)
Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith was a cousin of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, but this kinship did not prevent him from being one of the biggest enemies of Islām and the Muslims. He dedicated his entire life to fighting Islām and used innovative methods for this, including the use of stories, music, and singing slave girls as diversions. He was captured in Badr and was executed for his serious crimes.

Al-Nasafī (461–537 / 1068–1142)
ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, Abū Ḥafṣ al-Nasafī al-Ḥanafī, Najm al-Dīn was a Ḥanafī jurist and scholar of tafsīr, literature, and history. He was also a poet and produced books expressing Ḥanafī fiqh in verse. He was born in Nasaf and died in Samarqand. He wrote about a hundred books.

Al-Nawājī (788–859 /1386–1455)
Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿUthmān al-Nawājī, Shams al-Dīn was a literary critic, and poet. He was born and died in Cairo. Nawāj, which gave him his name, was in western Egypt. He traveled to the Ḥijāz for ḥajj, as well as to other cities. He left many manuscripts on literature and literary criticism. His anthology of madaḥ is called *Al-Maṭāliʿ al-Shamsiyyah fī 'l-Madā'iḥ al-*

Nabawiyyah (The Risings of the Sun in Panegyrics for the Prophet ﷺ).

Al-Nūrī. *See* ʿAlī al-Nūrī.

Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273)
Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abū Bakr ibn Faraḥ al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī al-Qurṭubī al-Andalūsī al-Mālikī, Abu ʿAbdullāh was one of the great exegetes of the Qur'an. He was born in Qurṭubah and studied there but later moved to a town in Asyūṭ in Egypt where he spent the rest of his life. His twenty volume tafsīr *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* is focused on the derivation of juristic rulings from the Qur'an. His other books include a book of supplications, one giving accounts of death and the life after death, and one on suppressing greed through zuhd and contentment.

Al-Rūdhbārī (d. 322/934)
Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Qāsim, Abū ʿAlī Al-Rūdhbārī was a great Sufi from the descendants of rulers and viziers. He wrote much on Sufism. He was from Baghdād but then settled in Egypt.

Al-Ṣaffār (247–341 / 861–952)
Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl, Abū ʿAlī al-Ṣaffār was a poet and grammarian from Baghdād.

Al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988)
ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAlī al-Ṭūsī, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj was one of the greatest Sufi masters of all times. His book *al-Lumaʿ* remains one of the earliest and the most comprehensive books on Sufism.

Al-Ṣarṣarī (588–656 / 1192–1258)
Yaḥyā ibn Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā al-Anṣārī, Abū Zakariyyā, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ṣarṣarī was a poet from Ṣarṣar, which is close to Baghdād. He has an anthology of poetry including a 2774 verse poem of Ḥanbalī fiqh. A *qaṣīdah* he wrote shows his great poetic talent. In it each line contains all the letters of the alphabet. His anthology on *madaḥ* is *Al-Muntaqā min Madā'iḥ al-Rasūl*, or *Al-Mukhtār min Madā'iḥ al-Mukhtār*. He was martyred by the Mongols, although not before he killed one of the invaders despite being blind.

Al-Ṣāwī (1175–1241 / 1761–1825)
Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, al-Ṣāwī was a Mālikī jurist. He was born in Egypt, studied at al-Azhar, and died in Madināh. His *nisbah* comes from Ṣā' 'l-Ḥajar in western Egypt. Among his books is a commentary on *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* and a commentary of al-Būṣīrī's *al-Hamziyyah*.

Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī. See *Ibn Qudāmah, Shams al-Dīn al-Maqdisī.*

Al-Shaʿrānī (898–973 / 1493–1565)
ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥanafi, Al-Shaʿrānī, Abū Muḥammad was a prominent Sufi from Egypt. He was from the progeny of Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyyah. His forefathers included Sulṭān Aḥmad who was the sulṭān in Tunis but his son gave up royalty to join his Sufi shaykh Abū Madyan. From then on, the royal family turned into a family of Sufi masters. Al-Shaʿrānī studied with more than two hundred scholars and learnt from about a hundred Sufi masters. He wrote more than three hundred books. His book of Sufi Pledges was translated into Urdu by Mawlānā Zafar Aḥmad ʿUthmānī (d. 1394/1974).

Al-Shihāb Maḥmūd (644–725 / 1247–1325)
Maḥmūd ibn Salmān ibn Fahd al-Ḥanbalī al-Ḥalabī, later al-Dimashqī, Abū 'l-Thanā' Shihāb al-Dīn was a great writer and a prolific poet and dominated the poetry scene in Syria and Egypt for half a century. His *dīwān* of eulogy is called *Ahnā 'l-Manā'iḥ fi Asnā 'l-Madā'iḥ.*

Al-Suhrawardī (539–632/1145–1234)
ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdullāh, Abū Ḥafṣ Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī greatly expanded the Suhrawardī Sufi order that was started by his uncle Abū Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168). He was born in Suhraward, a village in northwestern Iran, and died in Baghdād. Among his prominent disciples are Saʿdī al-Shīrāzī and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī from Iran and Bahā' al-Dīn Zakariyyā from Multān. His lineage goes back to Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.

Sulaymān al-Taymī (d. 143/761)
Sulaymān ibn Ṭarkhān, Abū 'l-Muʿtamar al-Taymī al-Baṣrī was a Successor known for his piety, trustworthiness, and devotion to worship. He used to spend all night in salāh and used to fast often. His disciples include ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Mubārak, Shuʿbah, Hammād ibn Salamah, Sufyān ibn ʿUyanah, and his son Muʿtamar. He died in Baṣra at the age of 97.

Al-Ṭabarī (348–450 / 960–1058)
Ṭāhir ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Ṭāhir al-Ṭabarī al-Shāfiʿī, Al-Qāḍī Abū 'l-Ṭayyib was a leading Shāfiʿī scholar. He was born in Tabristan and also served as qāḍī in Karkh but later moved to Baghdād where he died. His eleven-volume *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar al-Muzanī* is an important book in Shāfiʿī fiqh. He also wrote a book to show the prohibition of samāʿ.

Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (683–756 / 1284–1355)
ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Kāfī ibn ʿAlī ibn Tamām al-Subkī al-Anṣārī al-Khazrajī, Abū 'l-Ḥasan, Taqī al-Dīn was the Shaykh al-Islām in the 8th/14th century and a prominent Shāfiʿī scholar. Born in Subk (Egypt), he moved to Cairo and then to al-Shām, where he served as a qāḍī beginning in 739 AH. He later returned to Cairo and lived there until his death. He produced books on tafsīr, biography, theology, and jurisprudence. He also wrote *al-Kāfiyah*, a rebuttal of *Qaṣīdah Nūniyyah* on theology, which is attributed to Ibn Qayyim. That *qaṣīdah* promotes anthropomorphism, against the established beliefs of Ahl-Sunnah. His son Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī is famous for his *Ṭabaqāt*.

Al-Ṭurtūshī (451–520 / 1059–1126)
Muḥammad ibn al-Walīd ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashī al-Andalusī, Abū Bakr al-Ṭurtūshī was a prominent Mālikī scholar from al-Andalus. A contemporary of Imām Ghazālī, he traveled to Egypt, Syria, Irāq, Ḥijāz, and Palestine. He spent much time teaching in Alexandria during the Shīʿah ʿUbaydī rule. He authored about thirty-two books, seventeen of which are extant. Among his famous students is Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ, the author of *al-Shifā*. Al-Ṭurtūshī is known for his *Sirāj al-Mulūk*, an original work on political

science in which he discusses the desirable qualities for the sulṭān and those that lead to his downfall. He discusses law and conduct of wars, injustice and its evil effects and collection and distribution of public funds.

Sulaymān ibn Mūsā (d. 119/737)

Abū Ayyūb Sulaymān ibn Mūsā al-Ashdaq was a Ḥadīth narrator from the Successors to the Successors from Damascus. He was known as the leader of the youth in al-Shām.

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (61–101 / 720–781)

ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam al-Umawī al-Quraishī, Abū Ḥafṣ was the great grandson of Sayyidunā ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه. He is often referred to as the Fifth Rightly Guided Caliph. He was born and raised in Madīnah and became its governor. Later Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik made him a wazīr of al-Shām and he became the Khalīfah after his death. He used to live a life of luxury before his caliphate but abandoned all the luxuries immediately after assuming khilāfah. He brought back the style of government set by the Rightly Guided Khalifahs to the Umawī government.

Umayyah ibn Abī ʾl-Ṣalt (d. 5/626)

Umayyah ibn Abī ʾl-Ṣalt ibn Abū Rabīʿah ibn Awf al-Thaqafī was a talented Ṭāifī poet from the Jāhiliyyah days. Well-versed with the books of the Christians and Jews, he was one of those who abstained from drinking alcohol and worshipping idols in the Jāhiliyyah period. He was asked once by the Quraysh what he thought about the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, to which he replied, "I bear witness he is on the Truth." They then asked him, "Do you follow him." He said, "I have to look into his affair before I decide."

The Muslims then migrated to Madīnah, and eventually Ibn Abī ʾl-Ṣalt decided to join them and accept Islām. But when he arrived he learnt of the Battle of Badr which had just occurred, and in which his cousin, fighting on the side of the pagans, was killed. Unable to overcome this loss, he went back to Ṭāif without accepting Islām. He died there in 5/626. The Prophet ﷺ used to listen to and appreciate his poetry and said that he was close to accepting Islām.

Walīd II (86–126 / 707–744)

Walīd ibn Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was one of the worst ʿAbbasī rulers in terms of moral rectitude. He was a drunkard who boasted he would drink at the top of the Kaʿbah. He married the maids of his father. He was also deeply interested in music. Due to his repulsive behavior people turned against him and secretly pledged allegiance to his cousin Yazīd III, the son of Walīd I. Walīd II was deposed by the popular revolt within a year of his ascension to the throne and killed.

Walīd al-Aʿẓamī (1348–1425 / 1930–2004)

Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Mahdī al-Aʿẓamī al-ʿUbaydī was one of the major Islamic poets of this century. Born in the al-Aʿẓamiyya neighborhood of Baghdad, Irāq in 1930 into a religious family, he memorized the Qur'an at an early age. He began composing poetry at the age of fifteen. He would gather with friends at a cemetery near the Masjid of al-Imam al-A'zam and together they would spend time doing recitation of Qur'ān and exchanging Islāmic qaṣīdāhs.

As he grew older, he began composing larger works of Islāmic poetry. In 1959, he published his first *dīwān*, called *ash-Shuʿāʿ* and three more *dīwāns* before his death: *Al-Zawābiʿ*, *Aghānī 'l-Maʿrakah*, and *Nafaḥāt Qalb*. He also wrote several books, including *Shāʿir al-Islām: Ḥassān ibn Thābit* [The Poet of Islam: Ḥassān ibn Thābit], *Tārīkh al-Aʿẓamiyyah* [History of al-Aʿẓamiyyah], and *Al-Sayf al-Yamānī fi Naḥr al-Iṣfahānī Ṣāḥib al-Aghānī* [The Yemeni Sword in the Neck of al-Iṣfahānī, Author of al-Aghānī].

He was an expert calligrapher, having studied under famous scribes such as Amīn al-Bukhārī, the scribe of the *kiswah* (cover) of the Kaʿbah, and Ibrāhīm al-Barnas, one of the calligraphers of Masjid al-Ḥarām in Makkah.

A courageous poet, he was unafraid to speak the truth despite the threats of those opposed to it. He stood firm against the foreign ideologies that threatened the Muslim world, calling for people to return to Islām and seek therein the solutions to the Ummah's problems.

He passed away at the age of seventy-four, on Saturday, the first of Muḥarram 1425 AH (February 21, 2004) in al-Aʿzamiyya, Irāq.

Al-Witrī (d. 662/1264)

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr ibn Rashīd, Abū ʿAbdullāh, Majd al-Dīn al-Witrī, also known as author of *Witriyyah* was a Shāfiʿī preacher from the poets of Baghdād. He was most famous for his collection of poems praising the Prophet ﷺ, *al-Witriyyāt fī Madḥ Afḍal al-Kā'ināt* (The *witriyyah* collection in praise of the Best in the Universe). It is also known as *al-Witriyyāt fī Madḥ Khayr al-Bariyyah* (The *witriyyah* collection in praise of the Best of Creation).

Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn (158–233/775–848)

Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn ibn ʿAwn ibn Ziyād al-Baghdādī, Abū Zakariyyā was one of the foremost imāms of *jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* (the science of Ḥadīth criticism). He was born in a village in al-Anbār (in Irāq) and lived in Baghdād. He died in Madīnah on his journey for ḥajj. According to his own account Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn had hand-written one million aḥādīth. Great Ḥadīth scholars like al-Nasā'ī, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī praised him as being the most knowledgeable about the Ḥadīth narrators. Baqī ibn Makhlad, the Ḥadīth scholar from al-Andalus who walked all the way to Irāq to learn Ḥadīth from Imām Aḥmad, noted that Ibn Maʿīn knew more about the Ḥadīth narrators in al-Andalus than Baqī himself.

Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah (25–64 / 645–683)

Yazīd ibn Muʿāwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān al-Umawī was the second Umawī caliph. His father was Muʿāwiyah ibn Abū Sufyān, a famous Companion of the Prophet ﷺ and the founder of the Umawī dynasty.

Zayn al-Dīn ibn al-Munayyir (d. 695 AH)
ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Manṣūr ibn al-Munayyir, Zayn al-Dīn was a Mālikī jurist, judge, author, and teacher in Alexandria. He wrote a commentary on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī.

Al-Ziriklī (1310–1395/1893–1976)
Khayr ad-Dīn al-Ziriklī was a historian, biographer, and poet from Beirut where his father owned a business. His parents were from al-Shām. He received education at a traditional madrassah in Damascus and learnt French in Beirut. From his youth he was interested in poetry and journalism. In 1921 he acquired Saudi citizenship and worked on assignments for Amīr Faisal as well as for Amīr ʿAbdullāh of Jordan. He is most well-known for his well organized eight volume book of biographies of important people throughout Islāmic history. He died in Cairo.

APPENDIX 4

GLOSSARY

adhān: The call to ṣalāh made five times a day.

‘ālim (pl. ‘ulamā’): An Islāmic religious scholar. Literally scholar.

Anṣār: The Muslims of Madīnah who welcomed Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the other Muslims who migrated from Makkah to Madīnah, who are known as *muhājirūn*. Literally, helpers.

Aws and Khazraj: The two major Arab tribes that inhabited Yathrib before the migration of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and the Muslims of Makkah.

awtār: Stringed instruments.

Al-Azhar: One of the largest and oldest Islāmic universities. Located in Egypt.

barbaṭ: Persian lute. A kind of *‘ūd*.

bāṭil: False.

būq: Horn, trumpet.

dhikr: Remembrance of Allāh. Literally remembrance.

dhimmīs: Protected non-Muslim minorities living in the Islāmic state. From *dhimmah* meaning protection and care.

dīwān: A collection of poems by one poet.

duff: A frame drum, which has a drumhead diameter greater than its depth. Usually the drumhead is made of rawhide or man-made materials. When equipped with rings or small cymbals, it is called a tambourine. Other names for *duff* include *daff, bindīr, mizhar, ṭār,* and *riq*.

fāsiq: Sinner.

fatwā: A legal verdict issued by a qualified Islāmic law expert, known as a muftī.

fiqh: Islāmic jurisprudence.

faqīh (pl. fuqahā'): An expert on fiqh.

gharīb: A ḥadīth which has only one narrator in one or more links in its *isnād* or chain of transmission .

ghinā': Singing to cause enchantment or ṭarab. Literally singing or raising of one's voice.

ghirbāl: A sieve used as a duff.

Ḥadīth: The sayings and the traditions of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ or his actions, or the words or actions of others that he witnessed and tacitly approved.

ḥāfiẓ (pl. ḥuffāẓ): A Ḥadīth master who has memorised a very large number of aḥādīth (100,000 according to some)—their texts, chains of transmissions, and meanings. The word ḥāfiẓ is also used for someone who has memorized the entire Qur'ān.

ḥalāl: Anything that is lawful and permitted in Islāmic law.

ḥanbalī: Follower of the Ḥanbalī school of fiqh, which is based on the work of Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.

ḥarām: Anything that is unlawful and prohibited in Islāmic law.

ḥayā': Sense of shame and modesty. The inner force that keeps us from committing inappropriate actions. A key Islāmic moral value.

ḥijāb: The external dress for women used to hide their attractiveness from *non-maḥram* men.

ḥudā: The song of the cameleer.

ijtihād: Inference of laws in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah through reasoning on issues where no prior ruling exists. There are detailed qualifications for the person permitted to do ijtihād and elaborate restrictions on the method of reaching the legal conclusions, and the scope within which it is permissible.

īmān: Faith

Jāhiliyyah: Ignorance. In Islāmic history it refers to the pre-Islāmic era that existed in Arabia after the teachings of Prophet Ibrāhīm ﵇ and Ismāʿīl ﵇ had been lost resulting in widespread immorality, oppression, and evil.

jalājil: Bells

jank: Harp, cymball. Convex brass plates that are struck.

jihād: Struggling in the path of Allāh.

kāhin: Soothsayer.

khuṭbah: A speech or sermon. It is commonly used to refer to the sermon given during the congregational ṣalāh on Friday or Eid.

kothā: Places in India where prostitutes perform.

laʿib: Literally, play.

maʿāzif: The plural of either *miʿzaf or ʿāzf.* It is a generic term that applies to all stringed, wind, and percussion instruments including *duff, ṭunbūr* and *shabbābah.*

maḥram: A woman's husband or close unmarriageable relatives like father, brother, and son.

malāhī: Musical instruments. Literally, instruments of diversion.

mandūb: Commendable, recommended.

maʿrifah: Cognition of Allāh.

mīrāthīs: A people who were singers and jesters in the Indian subcontinent.

mizmār (pl. mazāmīr): Flute. Wind instrument. Includes: *surnāy* (which is narrow at the top with a wide body and was used in caravans), *karjah* (used in weddings); *nāy*, *shabbābah*, and *yarāʿ* (the shepherd's flute).

mubāḥ: Permissible, permitted. Something for which there is neither reward nor punishment.

muḥarramāt: Forbidden things.

mujāhid: A person who takes part in a jihād.

mujtahid: Someone that is qualified to carry out ijtihād.

mukhannath: Effeminate man. Professional singer.

munshidah: Female reciter.

mutawātir: A ḥadīth which is narrated by a large number of narrators at all stages of the *isnād* or chain of transmission.

nafir: Long trumpet

nāy: A kind of flute. Vertical flute.:

nashīd: Song containing Islāmic themes.

non-maḥram: One who is not a maḥram, with whom marriage can take place. Laws of hijab apply to all non-maḥrams and it is not permissible to associate with them.

qaḍīb: Stick.

qārī: Someone who recites the Qur'ān.

qaṣā'id: A genre of Arabic poetry. Compositions in praise of someone.

qaynah: A slave girl songstress.

qawl: Sufi devotional song. Literally, the word.

qawwāl: The singer of the Sufi devotional songs.

Qur'ān: The Last and Final Book that Allāh revealed for mankind. It was revealed over a period of twenty-three years through Angel Jibrīl (Gabriel) on to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ. Note: The Qur'ān is in Arabic. Although it has been translated into nearly every language of the world, those translations cannot be called the Qur'ān. So phrases like the English Qur'ān are meaningless.

qussaba: A kind of flute.

rabāb: Rebec, one of the earliest forms of the violin. A bowed string musical instrument.

sadd al-dharīʿah: A principle in Islāmic jurisprudence that holds that whatever leads to a prohibited act is also prohibited. Literally, blocking the means (to a sin).

ṣaḥīḥ: Authentic, sound. In Ḥadīth terminology it refers to authentic reports. There are detailed conditions specified by Ḥadīth masters that are required before a ḥadīth could be designated as ṣaḥīḥ.

ṣalāh: The prescribed act of worship in Islām, which includes the acts of standing, kneeling, and prostrating before Allāh.

ṣalāt al-istisqā': Special ṣalāh to supplicate for rain.

samāʿ: Sufi spiritual songs. Singing of such songs.

ṣanj: cymbals

ṣawt: voice.

sayyidunā: Literally, our master. A term of reverence used to refer to the pious predecessors, especially the prophets and the Ṣaḥābah.

shabbābah: See *yarā'.*

shaykh: A title of respect. Feminine: shaykhah.

shirk: Polytheism, associating partners with Allāh.

sufi: A practioner of Taṣawwuf. Mystic.

ṭabl: Drum

tadlīs: Hiding a defect or a fact. A term in Ḥadīth sciences referring to potential cases where a defect in the chain may have been concealed by a reporter.

tafsīr: Commentary on the Holy Qur'ān.

taghbīr: An earlier deviant Sufi singing ceremony that started with a recitation from the Qur'ān and then moved on to singing of Sufi poetry and then to dance.

tajwīd: The art of reciting the Qur'ān according to the established rules of pronunciation.

talḥīn: melodizing. The condemned practice of rendering Qur'ānic recitation in musical styles.

ṭarab: Enchantment. Sensual pleasure caused by listening to singing.

taqwā: Consciousness of Allāh. Fear of displeasing Allāh by committing acts He prohibited or by failing to do what He commanded.

tarjīʿ: Repeating a sound in the throat. Reverberation.

tartīl: Reciting the Qur'ān clearly in a distinct and measured tone.

ṭawā'if: Prostitute.

tawḥīd: The doctrine of the "Oneness of God." This is a central tenet of Islām, upon which all other beliefs and doctrines are based.

taʿzīr: (Discretionary) punishment handed down by the state as opposed to ḥudūd, the unchangeable punishment prescribed by the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

ṭunbūr: Any of the various long-necked, fretted lutes. Also known as *sāz* in Turkey, *sitār* in Iran, and *tambura* in India. Mandolin.

ʿūd: Lute. The famous plucked string instrument consisting of four wires with a neck and a deep round back. German musicologist Eckhard Neubauer suggested that ʿūd may be an Arabicized version of the Persian name rud, which meant string, stringed instrument, or lute. Of the four wires of ʿūd, the first is called *zer* and the last *bam* in

Arabic. These are Persian words meaning low and high respectively and suggest the Persian link to the ʿūd.

‘ulamā’: See *‘ālim.*

‘Umrah of Qaḍā’: ‘Umrah is the lesser pilgrimage to Makkah. ‘Umrah of Qaḍā’ is an ‘Umrah which could not be performed due to circumstances being beyond one’s control. It is then performed later when possible. ‘Umrah of Qaḍā’ of Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ took place in Dhū ’l-Qaʿdah 7 AH.

wajd: The state of ecstasy in which a person becomes totally absorbed in the love of Allāh.

yarāʿ: Shepherd’s flute.

zāhid (pl. zuhhād): Ascetic.

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